**SHAUN RYDER** SEARCHING FOR THE SAUCERS

**A TASTE FOR FLESH**
CANNIBAL TALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**SECRET SPECIMENS**
A FORGOTTEN CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

**MEXICAN MIRACLES**
GIVING THANKS FOR BEATING THE REAPER

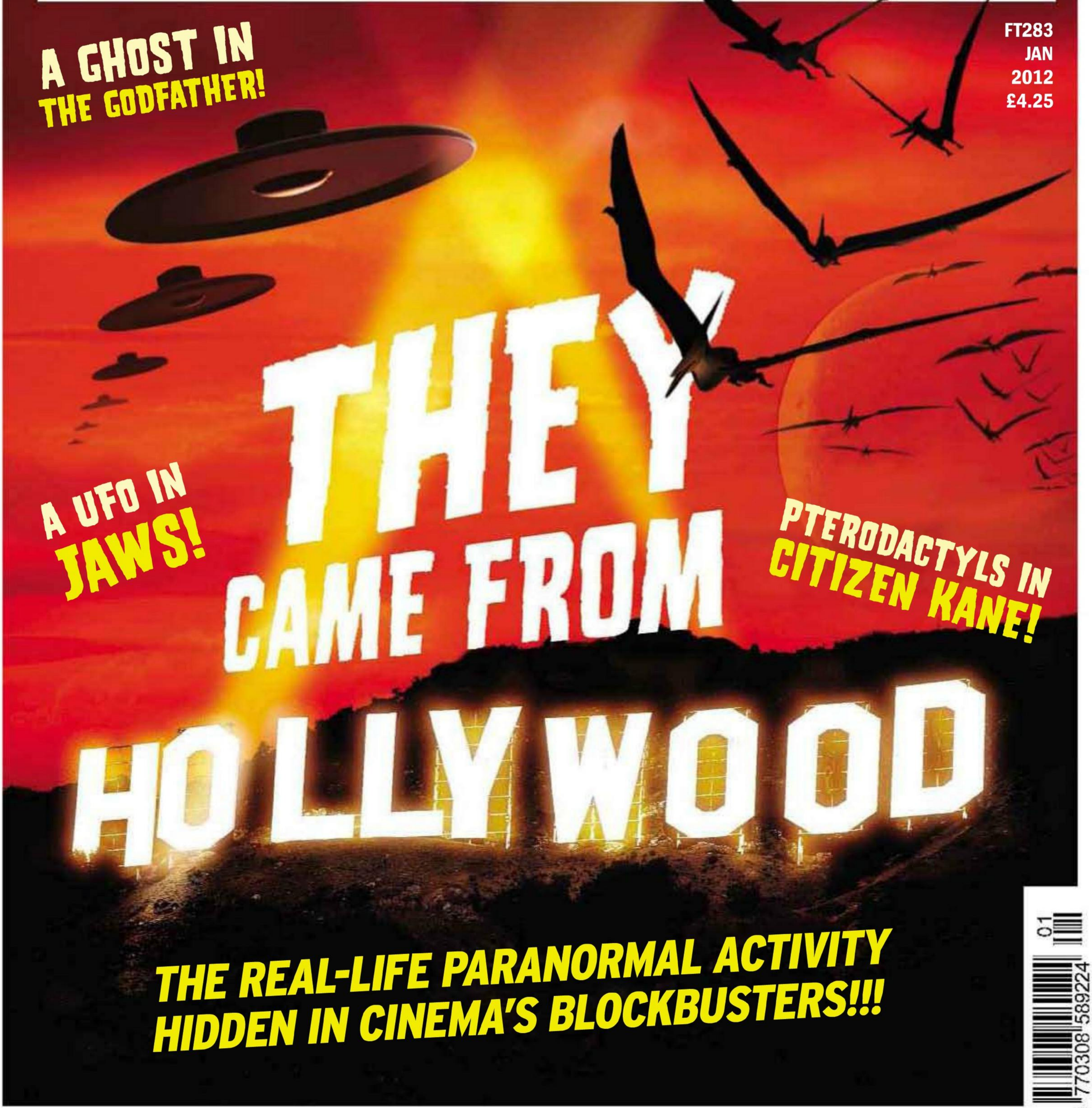
**THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES**

PHANTOM HOUSES • BODY COLLECTOR • ZOMBIE GRAVEYARDS • LIZARD MEN

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA
WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

# ForteanTimes

FT283
JAN
2012
£4.25



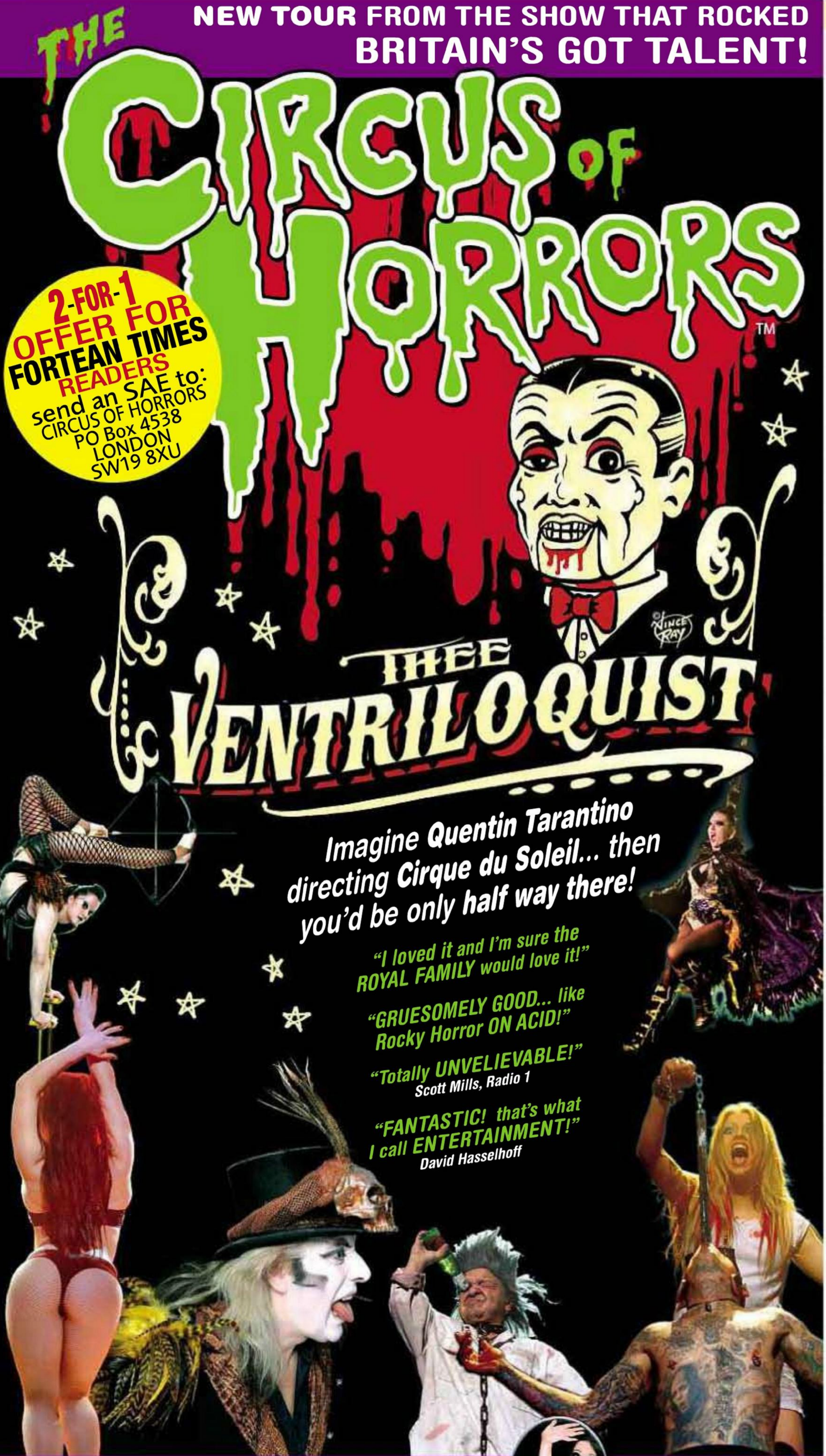
A GHOST IN THE GODFATHER!

A UFO IN JAWS!

PTERODACTYLS IN CITIZEN KANE!

# THEY CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD

THE REAL-LIFE PARANORMAL ACTIVITY HIDDEN IN CINEMA'S BLOCKBUSTERS!!!


THE
CIRCUS OF HORRORS
TM
THEE VENTRILOQUIST
Vince Ray
2-FOR-1 OFFER FOR FORTEAN TIMES READERS
send an SAE to:
CIRCUS OF HORRORS
PO Box 4538
LONDON
SW19 8XU
Imagine Quentin Tarantino directing Cirque du Soleil... then you'd be only half way there!
"I loved it and I'm sure the ROYAL FAMILY would love it!"
"GRUESOMELY GOOD... like Rocky Horror ON ACID!"
"Totally UNVELIEVABLE!"
Scott Mills, Radio 1
"FANTASTIC! that's what I call ENTERTAINMENT!"
David Hasselhoff

**NEW TOUR FROM THE SHOW THAT ROCKED BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT!**

## 2012 DATES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **SOUTHEND** Cliffs Pavilion | **MON 9 JAN** | |
| 01702 351 135 | www.thecliffspavilion.co.uk | |
| **COLCHESTER** Mercury Theatre | **TUE 10 / 11 JAN** | |
| 01206 573 948 | www.mercurytheatre.co.uk | |
| **BASINGTOKE** The Anvil | **THRS 12 JAN** | |
| 01256 844 244 | www.anvilarts.org.uk | |
| **TRURO** Hall for Cornwall | **FRI 13 & 14 JAN** | |
| 01872 262 466 | www.hallforcornwall.co.uk | |
| **SALISBURY** City Hall | **SUN 15 JAN** | |
| 01722 434 434 | www.cityhallsalisbury.co.uk | |
| **AYLESBURY** Waterside Theatre | **TUE 17 JAN** | |
| 0844 871 7615 | www.ambassadortickets.com/Aylesbury | |
| **HEREFORD** Courtyard Theatre | **WED 18 JAN** | |
| 01432 340 555 | www.courtyard.org.uk | |
| **SWANSEA** Grand Theatre | **THRS 19 JAN** | |
| 01792 475 715 | www.swanseagrand.co.uk | |
| **WOLVERHAMPTON** Civic Theatre | **FRI 20 JAN** | |
| 0870 320 7000 | www.wolvescivic.co.uk | |
| **DUNSTABLE** Grove Theatre | **SAT 21 JAN** | |
| 01582 602 080 | www.grovetheatre.co.uk | |
| **BROMLEY** Churchill Theatre | **SUN 22 JAN** | |
| 0844 871 7620 | www.ambassadortickets.com/Bromley | |
| **HAYES** Beck Theatre | **MON 23 JAN** | |
| 020 8561 8371 | www.becktheatre.org.uk | |
| **WORTHING** Pavilion Theatre | **TUE 24 JAN** | |
| 01903 206 206 | www.worthingtheatres.co.uk | |
| **READING** Hexagon | **WED 25 JAN** | |
| 0118 960 6060 | www.readingarts.com | |
| **STOKE** Victoria Hall | **THRS 26 JAN** | |
| 0844 871 7615 | www.ambassadortickets.com/Victoria-Hall | |
| **LICHFIELD** Garrick Theatre | **FRI 27 JAN** | |
| 01543 412 121 | www.lichfieldgarrick.com | |
| **LLANDUDNO** Venue Cymru | **SAT 28 JAN** | |
| 01492 872 000 | www.venuecymru.co.uk | |
| **WATFORD** Colosseum | **SUN 29 JAN** | |
| 0845 075 3993 | www.watfordcolosseum.co.uk | |
| **STEVENAGE** Gordon Craig Theatre | **MON 30 JAN** | |
| 01438 363 200 | www.gordon-craig.co.uk | |
| **NEW BRIGHTON** Floral Pavilion Theatre | **TUE 31 JAN** | |
| 0151 666 0000 | www.floralpavilion.com | |
| **ROTHERHAM** Civic Theatre | **THRS 2 FEB** | |
| 01709 823 621 | www.rotherham.gov.uk/theatres | |
| **HALIFAX** Victoria Theatre | **FRI 3 FEB** | |
| 01422 351 158 | www.victoriatheatre.co.uk | |
| **NOTTINGHAM** Royal Concert Hall | **SAT 4 FEB** | |
| 0115 989 5555 | www.royalcentre-nottingham.co.uk | |
| **RETFORD** Majestic Theatre | **SUN 5 FEB** | |
| 01777 706 866 | www.majesticretford.com | |
| **SHEFFIELD** City Hall | **MON 6 FEB** | |
| 0114 278 9789 | www.sheffieldcityhall.co.uk | |
| **KILMARNOCK** The Palace | **TUE 7 FEB** | |
| 01563 554 900 | www.visiteastayrshire.com | |
| **GLENROTHES** Rothes Halls | **WED 8 FEB** | |
| 01592 611 101 | www.onfife.com | |
| **ABERDEEN** Concert Hall | **THRS 9 FEB** | |
| 01224 641 122 | www.boxofficeaberdeen.com | |
| **INVERNESS** Eden Court Theatre | **FRI 10 FEB** | |
| 01463 234 234 | www.eden-court.co.uk | |
| **FALKIRK** Town Hall | **SAT 11 FEB** | |
| 01324 506 850 | www.ticketweb.co.uk | |
| **MOTHERWELL** Concert Hall | **SUN 12 FEB** | |
| 01698 274 545 | www.motherwelltheatre.co.uk | |
| **PRESTON** Guild Hall | **TUE 14 FEB** | |
| 0845 344 2012 | www.prestonguildhall.com | |
| **BURNLEY** Mechanics | **WED 15 FEB** | |
| 01282 664 400 | www.burnleymechanics.co.uk | |
| **TELFORD** Oakengates Theatre @ the place | **THRS 16 FEB** | |
| 01952 382 382 | www.theplacetelford.com | |
| **CHELTENHAM** Town Hall | **FRI 17 FEB** | |
| 0844 576 2210 | www.cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk | |
| **BOURNEMOUTH** Pavilion | **SUN 19 FEB** | |
| 0844 576 3000 | www.bic.co.uk | |
| **LONDON** Indig02 | **SUN 26 FEB** | |
| 08448 440 002 | www.theo2.co.uk/indigo2 | |
| **BRISTOL** Colston Hall | **MON 27 FEB** | |
| 0117 922 3686 | www.colstonhall.org | |
| **BIRMINGHAM** Alexandra Theatre | **TUE 28 FEB** | |
| 0844 871 3011 | www.alexandratheatre.org.uk | |
| **STAFFORD** Gatehouse Theatre | **WED 29 FEB** | |
| 01785 254 653 | www.staffordgatehousetheatre.co.uk | |
| **KINGS LYNN** Corn Exchange | **THRS 1 MAR** | |
| 01553 764 864 | www.kingslynncornexchange.co.uk | |
| **GT YARMOUTH** The Hippodrome | **FRI 2 / SAT 3 MAR** | |
| 01493 844 172 | www.hippodromecircus.co.uk | |
| **BRIGHTON** Theatre Royal | **SUN 4 MAR** | |
| 08448 717 650 | www.ambassadortickets.com/brighton | |
| **SOUTHSEA** Kings Theatre | **TUE 6 MAR** | |
| 02392 828 282 | www.kings-southsea.com | |
| **HARLOW** Playhouse | **WED 7 MAR** | |
| 01279 431 945 | www.playhouseharlow.com | |
| **DARTFORD** Orchard Theatre | **THRS 8 MAR** | |
| 01322 220 000 | www.orchardtheatre.co.uk | |
| **DERBY LIVE** Assembly Rooms | **FRI 9 MAR** | |
| 01332 255 800 | www.derbylive.co.uk | |
| **BARROW** The Forum | **SAT 10 MAR** | |
| 01229 820 000 | www.theforumbarrow.co.uk | |
| **GLASGOW** King's Theatre | **SUN 11 MAR** | |
| 0844 871 7648 | www.ambassadortickets.com/King's-Theatre | |
| **MANCHESTER** Opera House | **MON 12 MAR** | |
| 0844 871 3018 | www.manchesteroperahouse.org.uk | |
| **DONCASTER** Civic Theatre | **TUE 13 MAR** | |
| 01302 342349 | www.doncastercivic.co.uk | |
| **NORTHAMPTON** Royal & Derngate | **WED 14 MAR** | |
| 01604 624 811 | www.royalandderngate.co.uk | |
| **IPSWICH** Regent Theatre | **THRS 15 MAR** | |
| 01473 433 100 | www.ipswichregent.com | |
| **MARGATE** Winter Gardens | **FRI 16 MAR** | |
| 01843 296 111 | www.margatewintergardens.co.uk | |
| **CLACTON** Princes Theatre | **SAT 17 MAR** | |
| 01255 686 633 | www.essex-live.co.uk | |
| **SWINDON** Wyvern Theatre | **SUN 18 MAR** | |
| 01793 524 481 | www.wyverntheatre.org.uk | |
| **WOKING** New Victoria Theatre | **MON 19 MAR** | |
| 0844 871 7645 | www.ambassadortickets.com/woking | |
| **OXFORD** New Theatre | **TUE 20 MAR** | |
| 0844 847 1585 | www.newtheatreoxford.org.uk | |
| **JERSEY** Opera House | **THRS 22 to SAT 24** | |
| 01534 511 115 | www.jerseyoperahouse.co.uk | |

**circusofhorrors.co.uk**

Follow us on Twitter Facebook and YouTube

BIZARRE CLASSIC ROCK HAMMER SkinDeep Le Maitre

**WARNING:** The Circus of Horrors contains some nudity and language of an adult nature, it is not suitable for children, sissies or chavs. This show contains nuts!

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS
ForteanTimes
THEY CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD
THE REAL-LIFE PARANORMAL ACTIVITY HIDDEN IN CINEMA'S BLOCKBUSTERS!!!

ForteanTimes
Available on the App Store

# CONTENTS

## the world of strange phenomena

# Fortean Times 283

## strange days

Cemetery expert robs graves; holiday goat hunt ends in cannibal tragedy; appropriate names; eastern European oddities; another Irish SHC case; medicine's weirder casebook; surviving falls; star jelly; 'alien' pig and one-eyed albino shark; a taste for long pork – and much more.

14 SCIENCE
16 GHOSTWATCH
17 MYTHCONCEPTIONS
18 ARCHÆOLOGY
19 CLASSICAL CORNER
21 ALIEN ZOO
23 KONSPIRACY KORNER
26 NECROLOG
27 STRANGE DEATHS
28 THE UFO FILES

## features

**COVER STORY**

### 34 THEY CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD!

In the first of a two-part survey, **PETER HASSALL** discusses some of the weirdest byways in cinema history, looking for feature films – including some *bona fide* classics – in which genuinely anomalous phenomena such as UFOS, ghosts or monsters have allegedly been accidentally caught on film.

### 40 A UFO IN 1561?

A famous woodcut from Nuremberg has often been adduced as evidence of a major early UFO sighting. **ULRICH MAGIN** takes a closer look at this misunderstood image and offers an alternative explanation.

### 44 THE OTHERKIN

What happens if, one day, it starts to dawn on you that rather than being a humdrum human being you are, in fact, an elf, or a unicorn, or even a chupacabra? **EMMA McNEIL** shines a light on the incredibly strange creatures who stopped being people and became mixed-up monsters...

### 48 THE SPECIMENS OF ALEX CF

**TIM WEINBERG** visits an unusual collection devoted to the study and documentation of unclassified non-human species... and meets its even more unusual curator.

## reports

**32 FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**
No. 115. **Miracles and charms** by David V Barrett

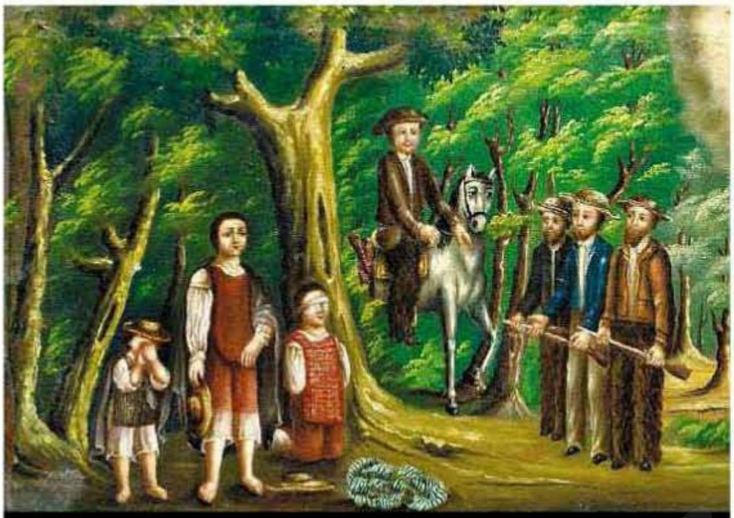
**76 STRANGE AND SENSATIONAL STORIES FROM THE ILLUSTRATED POLICE NEWS**
No. 8. **Tragic effects of practical joking** by Dr Jan Bondeson

## forum

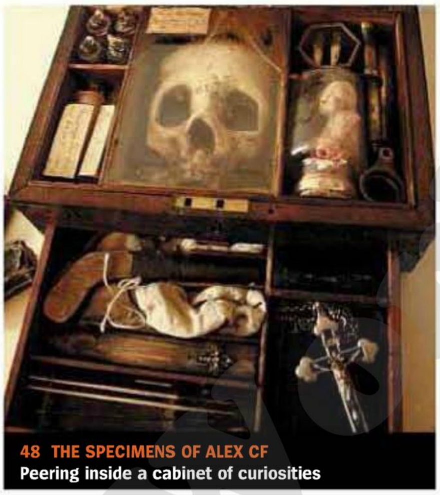
**53** What's with Wetzels? by Theo Paijmans
**54** Riverside reptilians by Martyn Jackson
**56** Welsh water-leaper by Dr Karl Shuker

## regulars

02 EDITORIAL
52 SUBSCRIPTIONS
59 REVIEWS
71 LETTERS
78 READER INFO
79 PHENOMENOMIX
80 TALES FROM THE VAULT

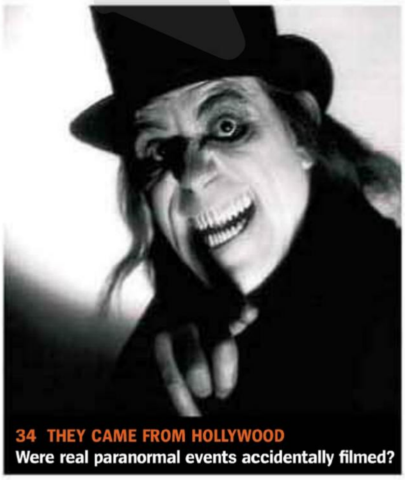

MUSEO REGIONAL DE PUEBLA

**32 MEXICAN MIRACLES**
Giving thanks to the saints for their help, plus lucky charms and protective amulets


WWW.ALEXCF.COM

**48 THE SPECIMENS OF ALEX CF**
Peering inside a cabinet of curiosities

**54 REPTILES OF RIVERSIDE**
A California town's man-lizards


**34 THEY CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD**
Were real paranormal events accidentally filmed?

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS / RYAN SCHUDE

**7 LAPPING IT UP**
Longest tongue and other records

MAIN COVER IMAGE: HOLLYWOOD SIGN: GETTY IMAGES / AFP / ROBIN BECK
UFOS & PTERODACTYLS: WWW.ALEX-TOMLINSON.COM / ETIENNE GILFILLAN
*OTHER COVER CREDITS:* SHAUN RYDER: GETTY IMAGES / AFP / LEON NEAL
CABINET OF CURIOSITIES: WWW.ALEXCF.COM MEXICAN MIRACLES: MUSEO NACIONAL DE HISTORIA / INAH

WorldMags.net

**EDITOR**
DAVID SUTTON (david_sutton@dennis.co.uk)
TEL: 020 7907 6235 FAX: 020 7907 6139
**FOUNDING EDITORS**
BOB RICKARD (rickard@forteantimes.com)
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteantimes.com)
**ART DIRECTOR**
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
(etienne_gilfillan@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6236
**SUB EDITOR**
OWEN WHITEOAK
(owen_whiteoak@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6237
**WEB EDITOR/PICTURE RESEARCHER**
NICK ČIRKOVIČ
(nick_cirkovic@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6238
**BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR**
VAL STEVENSON
(val_stevenson@dennis.co.uk) TEL: 020 7907 6239
**RESIDENT CARTOONIST**
HUNT EMERSON
**SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES**
www.subsinfo.co.uk
ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

You can manage your existing subscription through http://www.subsinfo.co.uk/ – this should be your first port of call if you have any queries about your subscription.

Change your address, renew your subscription
or report problems
UK subscriptions: 0844 844 0049
USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 888-428-6676
Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email cs@imsnews.com
Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0)1795 592 909
Fax: +44 (0)1795 414 555

**LICENSING & SYNDICATION**
*FORTEAN TIMES* IS AVAILABLE FOR
INTERNATIONAL LICENSING – CONTACT
HANNAH HEAGNEY: 020 7907 6134
hannah_heagney@dennis.co.uk
*FORTEAN TIMES* IS AVAILABLE FOR
INTERNATIONAL SYNDICATION – CONTACT
ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI: 020 7907 6132
anj_dosaj-halai@dennis.co.uk
**YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET**
www.forteantimes.com

**PUBLISHED BY**
DENNIS PUBLISHING,
30 Cleveland Street
London W1T 4JD, UK Tel: 020 7907 6000
**PUBLISHER**
PAUL RAYNER: 020 7907 6663
paul_rayner@dennis.co.uk
**CIRCULATION MANAGER**
james.mangan@seymour.co.uk
**EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER**
gareth.viggers@seymour.co.uk
**SENIOR PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE**
EBONY BESAGNI: 020 7907 6060
ebony_besagni@dennis.co.uk

**GROUP SALES DIRECTOR**
DAN REEVES
020 7907 6752
dan_reeves@dennis.co.uk
**SENIOR ADVERTISING SALES**
CIARAN SCARRY
020 7907 6683
ciaran_scarry@dennis.co.uk

**PRINTED** BY BENHAM GOODHEAD PRINT LTD

**DISTRIBUTION**
**Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide**
by Seymour Distribution Ltd.
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT
Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001
Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to info@seymour.co.uk
**Speciality store distribution** by Worldwide Magazine Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 7881272

**STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES**
12 issues: UK £39.98; EU £47.50;
REST OF THE WORLD £55; US $79.99 ($143.98 for 24 issues)

*Fortean Times* (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 4JD, United Kingdom. The 2008 US annual subscription price is $79.99.
Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, 11434.
Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.
**US Postmaster:** Send address changes to: Fortean Times, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

**DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED**

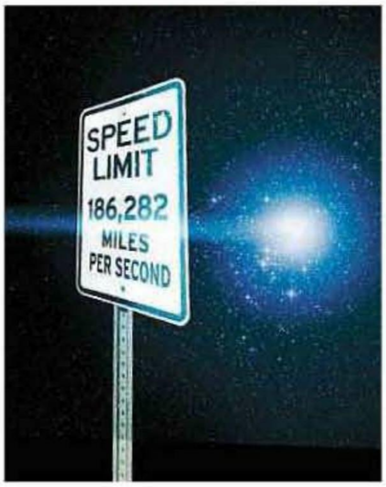
| | |
|---|---|
| **GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR** | IAN LEGGETT |
| **FINANCE DIRECTOR** | BRETT REYNOLDS |
| **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** | KERIN O'CONNOR |
| **CHIEF EXECUTIVE** | JAMES TYE |
| **CHAIRMAN** | FELIX DENNIS |

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899
© Fortean Times: DECEMBER 2011

# editorial

## An UnConventional success

Well, UnConvention 2011 came and went in what felt (to us) like a whirlwind of weirdness, and – judging from the feedback we've received – was over all too soon for many of you as well. We enjoyed a particularly fascinating and varied selection of talks this year, taking in everything from cursed stones and fatal ghosts to ape men and apocalyptic disappointments. If hidden themes emerged over the weekend, they were of talking creatures and mysterious voices from beyond: Chris Josiffe did his impression of Gef the Talking Mongoose, Jan Bondeson introduced Germany's talking dogs, Sarah Angliss played a rare recording of Hoover the Talking Seal (and immortalised one UnCon-goer's voice by recording it on a wax cylinder in an Edison Phonograph), while Nina Conti (although in New York at the time) sent in her touching new film about her mentor Ken Campbell's ventriloquial legacy.



ETIENNE GILFILLAN

For the first time, we also ran an evening event – UnCon Late – which sold out almost immediately (we'll obviously be needing a bigger venue next year) and was a hugely enjoyable way for people to let their hair down in a relaxed atmosphere. The Fortean Times Pub Quiz proved fiendishly difficult (yes, we'll make it a bit easier next time!), and high quality entertainment of the eccentric kind was provided by Atters Atree, regaling us with an illustrated lecture on his paranormal investigations ("Swabs were taken"); Sarah Angliss, playing the theremin and serenading a robotic crow; Helen Keen, putting on a shadow puppet show about the history of the photocopier; and Tia Anna Sore-Ass Wrecked, treating us to a Kate Bush impersonation that no one (especially Ben Foong) will soon forget.

We'll soon be making plans for next year's event – so please email, tweet or post on our Facebook page your feedback, suggestions, speaker wish-lists and anything else that will help us make UnCon 2012 even better. In the meantime, UnCon attendee Stuart Ferrol will be presenting his full report in our on-sale January issue.

## ERRATA

Perhaps it was the strain of putting on UnCon, but we've suffered from a spate of gremlins lately; here's the latest batch of snafus that snuck straight past the not-so-eagle-eyed *FT* team…

**FT281:22** Due to a production issue, a line of text was missing in Angela Kennedy's article "Knights Templar Hijacked". Column three should have begun: "Obsessed with the idea that [nationalism in Western Europe is being crushed]..."

**FT281:27** The caption for the photograph of a Labrador mourning by his owner's coffin should have named his owner as Jon Tumilson, not Tomlinson.

**FT281:68** We printed a letter from Francis Gandon which accused Tom Heywood of not referring to Guy W Lambert's works on the Verseilles time-slip episode in his feature on the subject; however, Mr Heywood did include a paragraph on Mr Lambert's opinions [**FT278:33–34**].

**FT282:14** We received a number of communications about this highly visible howler, but first off the mark was Andrew May of Crewkerne, Somerset:

"I'm sure that by now you're tired of people pointing this out, but as a former physicist I couldn't let it pass without comment! Etienne's graphic on page 14 of **FT282** shows a "speed limit" of 186,282 miles per hour, whereas, as the text correctly states, the speed of light is 3,600 times faster than this at 186,282 miles per second. Although 186,282 mph sounds fast by Earthly standards (it's almost five times as fast as the fastest spacecraft ever launched), it isn't that fast by astronomical standards. It's about three-eighths of the speed with which the Sun (and the rest of the Solar System) orbits around the centre of the Galaxy."

**FT282:65** The 'Also Received' section carried a review of *Grassroots UFOs* in which the author was given as Robert John Langdon and the publisher as ABC Publishing. This was incorrect on both counts: the book was in fact written by Michael Swords and published by Anomalist Books (anomalistbooks.com); our apologies to author Michael and publisher Patrick Huyghe of Anomalist Books.

DAVID SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
PAUL SIEVEKING

**Why fortean?**

Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

**SEE PAGE 78**

# Join all these forums and more with one click!

THT
THE HORROR TANNERY
THE DAMAGE DEPOT
WHERE ACTION FILMS ARE ART!
KYLE'S COMP CORNER
CULT Digest.
ARROW VIDEO
OFFICIAL FORUM
Shameless Screen Entertainment
OFFICIAL FAN FORUM
THE TWILIGHT ZONE
OFFICIAL UK DVD & BD FORUM
PRISONER CELL BLOCK H
OFFICIAL UK DVD FORUM
CULT 101
THE GRINDHOUSE PROJECT
CULT ARTS
Where Cult Meets Culture
CULT LABORATORIES MEMBERS CLUB

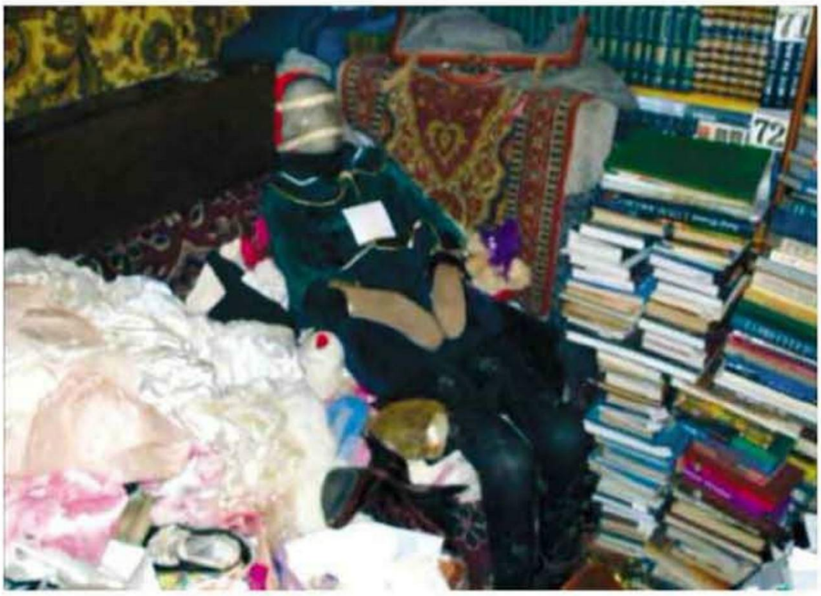
**Head on over to CULT-LABS.COM - where your taste in film is good!**

A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

# strangedays

## Macabre real doll collection

### Cemetery expert found to have remains looted from graves – in party clothes, with cloth-wrapped faces



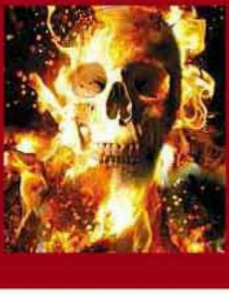
PA PHOTOS

In early November, 29 female corpses – variously described as dried up, mummified or skeletal – were found in the apartment of Anatoly Moskvin, 45 (above right), a local historian regarded by some people as a "genius". He had positioned the women and girls, all thought to have died between the ages of 12 (or 15) and 30 (or 26), around the small three-room apartment he shared with his parents in Nizhny Novgorod, a city on the Volga in western Russia, 250 miles (400km) east of Moscow. They were dressed in colourful clothes and headscarves (above left), thought to have been scavenged from graves, with their hands, and often their faces, covered in cloth. Police said they looked doll-like; one was dressed up as a teddy bear. "When we tried to move one of the bodies, the room filled with music," said an investigator. "The melody of the song 'The Bear Really Loves Honey' came from the body of a young girl. Detailed inspection revealed that a musical mechanism had been placed inside her that was activated by touch." Other rib cages contained toy hearts, soap and stockings. There were also piles of gravestone plaques, maps of cemeteries, photographs of graves, dolls, and doll-making manuals. So far none of the corpses has been identified, but forensics officers say they were disinterred from one to 15 years ago.

**One of the skeletons was dressed up as a teddy bear**

Some reports suggest that Moskvin was turned in by his own parents. Spending most of the year at their country dacha, they returned in October to find their son working on one of his 'dolls'. Another version is that the local police paid Moskvin a visit, with the intention of asking the biggest cemetery expert in the area for help with the investigation into the desecration of graves at several cemeteries in the city since 2004. In the event, they discovered his dark secret by accident.

Moskvin, who holds a postgraduate degree in Celtic studies and speaks 13 languages, is well known locally for his fascination with graveyards, and claims to have visited 752 of them between 2005 and 2007. He was planning to publish a cemetery guidebook. "When I was a pioneer in 1979, by pure accident, I took part in an occult ceremony that took place in a cemetery," he said in a newspaper interview. "I have been strongly drawn to these places ever since." He said he would travel 20 miles (32km) a day on foot and drink from puddles, spent nights in haystacks and abandoned farms, and had once slept in a coffin readied for a funeral. He also mentioned getting caught once with a fretsaw in his bag and narrowly avoiding being beaten up by locals. In the interview he claimed to have been using it to clear gravestone plaques in order to read them. In October, he wrote a piece in which he described coming across a funeral procession when he was 12 and being forced to kiss the face of a dead 11-year-old girl. At the time of the most recent report, he had not been charged and was due to undergo psychological analysis. *telegraph.co.uk, 3 Nov; BBC News, 4 Nov; MSNBC, via disinfo.com, 5 Nov; rt.com.news, dailymail.co.uk, Metro, 8 Nov; The Australian 10 Nov 2011.*



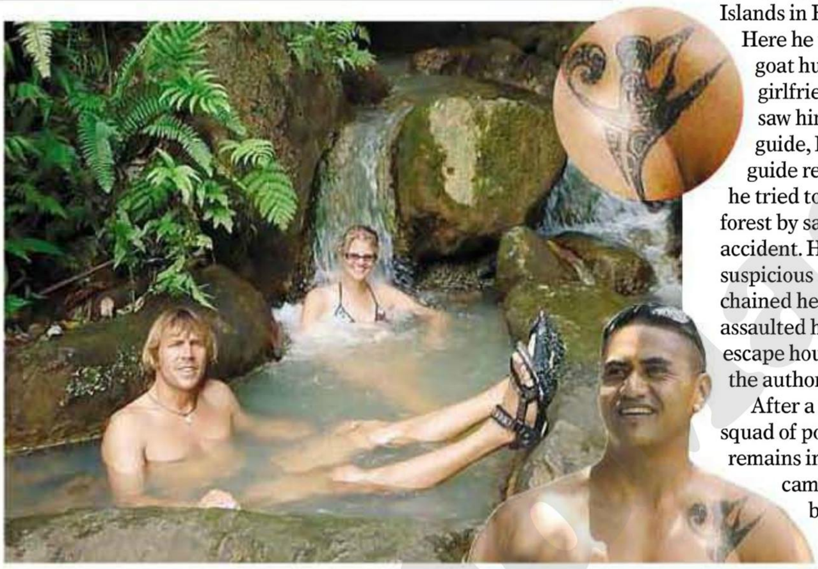
**FLAMING HECK!**
Has Ireland seen another case of human combustion?
**PAGE 9**

**OUT OF THE PAST?**
Disappearing houses and phantom scenery
**PAGE 16**

**ZOMBIE GRAVEYARD**
Ancient burials designed to keep the dead from walking
**PAGE 18**

# Eaten by cannibals

## Holiday goat-hunt ends in gruesome death



Stefan Ramin, 40, set out in 2008 from Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, to sail round the world. On 16 September, he dropped anchor at Nuku Hiva, largest of the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia.

Here he went on a traditional goat hunt in the forest. His girlfriend, Heike Dorsch, 37, saw him depart with a local guide, Henri Haiti. Only the guide returned, she said, and he tried to lure her into the forest by saying: "There's been an accident. He needs help." She was suspicious and refused, so Haiti chained her to a tree and sexually assaulted her. She managed to escape hours later and alerted the authorities.

After a week-long search, a squad of police found human remains in the embers of a campfire, including a jawbone, teeth and melted metal believed to be dental fillings. There were clothes scattered around. Dental records from Germany showed that the teeth belonged to Ramin and the bones were sent to Paris for DNA testing. Investigators believe that Ramin was killed and eaten. Meanwhile, police and soldiers were hunting for Haiti, 31, who is a member of the island's canoe club and sports a tattoo of a Kaioi warrior in his canoe (inset). (The Kaioi tribe used to eat people.)

Over the centuries, the Marquesas Islands have featured in many reports of cannibalism, though local people said they abandoned the custom decades ago. However, instances of cannibalism continue to be reported around the world, particularly in Russia, as the grim litany on pp24–25 shows. *D.Mail, 17 Oct; Sun, 17+18+20 Oct; Independent, 18 Oct 2011.*

**FAR LEFT:** Stefan Ramin with Heidi Dorsch. **LEFT:** Tour guide Henri Haiti.

## EXTRA! EXTRA! FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**Silver Wizard is almost killed by Invisible King**

*Metro, 10 May 2011.*

**Farmers' misuse of drugs results in exploding melons**

*Independent, 18 May 2011.*

**Jesus in Gaza row**

*Oxford Student, 19 May 2011.*

**Woman 'molested' by Donald Duck paid off**

*Metro, 12 May 2011.*

**Police call in doctor to tell them headless man is dead**

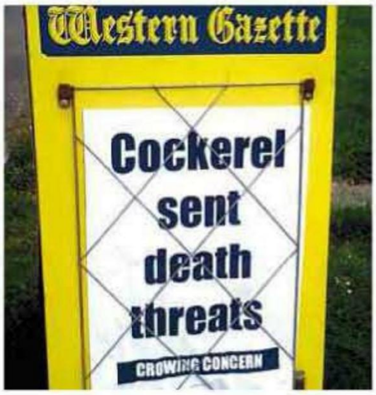
*D.Mail, 22 April 2011.*

**Conwoman posed as TS Eliot's twins**

*D.Mirror, 6 May 2011.*

**Woman missing since she got lost**

*Chicago Sun-Times, 17 May 2011.*



Western Gazette

Cockerel sent death threats

CROWING CONCERN

*Western Gazette, 5 May 2011.*

**CROSS-DRESSING MAN HIGH ON BATH SALTS KILLS NEIGHBOUR'S GOAT**

*gawker.com, via Irish Independent, 7 May 2011.*

# What's in a name?

## Hair-cutting Mullets, an angry Rage, Wrench's arm torn off

AP PHOTO / MIKE SCHENK, WOOSTER DAILY RECORD

**ABOVE:** The three Amish Mullet brothers (front) involved in a hair- and beard-cutting feud with rivals in the fundamentalist community.

### MULLET

A feud has broken out in an Amish community across four rural counties in Ohio. In September, six men and six women burst into an elderly couple's home, knocked them to the ground and cut off their hair and the man's beard. Days later, another Amish man was marched into a wood where his beard was cut off. Then on 4 October, five people were attacked and shorn, including a 13-year-old girl. The act of cutting off facial hair is deeply insulting to the Amish – a fundamentalist branch of the Mennonite Church, whose followers shun modern technology – as male followers are required to grow long beards and women are not allowed to cut their hair.

The Amish raiders reportedly brought back the hair to their spiritual leader, Bishop Sam Mullet, 65, to prove the attacks had been carried out. The bishop said he didn't order the latest attack but didn't stop two of his sons – Johnny, 38, and Lester, 26 – and another man, Levi Miller, 53, carrying it out. It is thought the Amish establishment shunned Mullet after his property was raided by police in 2007 following allegations of sexual abuse. He has about 18 families in his breakaway 'cult'. Bishop Mullet, three of his sons and three others were arrested on 22 November. *D.Mail, 7 Oct; wkyc.com, 9 Oct; Independent, 10 Oct; (London) Eve. Standard, 11 Oct; BBC News, 23 Nov 2011.*

> **Cutting off facial hair is deeply insulting to the Amish**

### COMETTE

A family returned from holiday in October to discover an egg-sized meteorite had smashed through the roof of their house in Draveil, about 12 miles (19km) south of Paris. They only noticed its presence when the roof started leaking. Scientists said it was the first such space rock found so close to the French capital and one of only about 60 meteorites to have landed in France in four centuries. In a further twist, the targeted family are named the Comettes.

"We got the roof tiler round and he was astounded," said Michelle Comette, 32. "He said: 'You need to be Superman to break a tile like that. It must be a meteorite'." The iron-rich celestial rock known as a "chondrite" was wedged in glass wool insulation in the attic. Alain Carion, a mineral scientist and meteorite hunter, said it was identifiable thanks to a "black fusion crust that characterises the crossing of the Earth's atmosphere". Estimated to be 4.57 billion years old, the 3oz (85g) object came from the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. "It's incredibly rare," he said. "We have never found any less than 80km [50 miles] from Paris before." *D.Telegraph, 11 Oct 2011.*

### RAGE

Following Kenya's military incursion into Somalia in mid-October, a spokesman for the Islamist militia al-Shabaab, which controls much of southern Somalia, said: "Your attack means your skyscrapers will be destroyed, your tourism will disappear. We shall inflict on you the same damage you inflicted on us." The spokesman was called Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage. A month earlier, Andalus radio, run by al-Shabaab, awarded some unusual prizes to the winners of a children's Koran recital competition. First prize: an AK-47 and £450. Second prize: an AK-47 and £320. Third prize: two F1 hand grenades and £250. The three children also received religious books. In certain areas, al-Shabaab has banned musical ringtones, films, football broadcasts, dancing at weddings and non-Arabic shop signs. *Irish Times, 21 Sept; D.Telegraph, 18 Oct 2011.*

### DEADMAN, CONSTABLE, BADGER

Fed up with a Canada goose fouling the greens at Petersfield Golf Club in Hampshire, Roger Deadman, a former club captain, shot the bird dead on the sixth fairway, and was reported to the police by John Constable. Appearing in Aldershot magistrates' court, he was supported by Peter Badger, the course's general manager. The court ruled that Deadman had acted lawfully by killing the bird for health and safety reasons. Terry Saunders wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* to say the whole episode sounded "like a Beatrix Potter story directed by Quentin Tarantino". *D.Telegraph, 15+17 Oct 2011.*

### WRENCH

A three-year-old boy had his arm torn off after playing in a washing machine at his home in Crewe, Cheshire. Lewis Wrench was found by his mother covered in blood with his left arm in the Creda 800 after reaching into the front-loader. Surgeons were unable to save the limb, which was torn off just below his shoulder. *Metro, 13 Oct 2011.*

### IT'S A RECORD!

Memorobilia collector Rob Hull has entered the 2012 edition of *Guinness World Records* for owning the world's biggest collection of Daleks, even though the 49-year-old, from Doncaster, claims to hate *Doctor Who*.

Harbor, a black and tan coonhound from Boulder, Colorado, finds a place for having the longest ears of any living dog – 12¼in (31.1cm) for the left ear and 13½in (34.3cm) for the right – while the record for longest tongue, at 3.8in (9.75cm), goes to Californian student Chanel Tapper. *Guiness World Records*

**FACING PAGE: DALEKS:** GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS / PA /// **DOG EARS:** GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS / AP /// **LONGEST TONGUE:** GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS / RYAN SCHUDE

## SIDELINES...

### SPOOKS HALT WORK

Workers renovating the National Archæological Museum in Naples downed tools after hearing unearthly screams and experiencing plunging temperatures and apparitions while working there overnight. The architect, who tried to reassure them by spending the night with them, ended up convinced the building was haunted. *MX News (Sydney), Sunday Post, 28 Aug 2011*.

### SNAKE ON THE LOOSE

For once, the familiar circus-escape story came true. A box containing a 10ft (3m) anaconda fell off a circus truck when traffic police stopped it for a document check near the village of Aksu-Ayuly in central Kazakhstan, terrifying the 6,000 residents. Police and emergency services eventually found the South American snake in a metal box near a roadside café on the outskirts of the village. *Queensland Times, 2 Aug 2011*.

### DONER'S A LONER

An unnamed man in Ukraine sold a kidney for £12,300 and spent the cash on an engagement ring for his lover – only for her to dump him. *D.Mirror, 22 July 2011*.

### READY, STEADY, SLOW

The World Snail Racing Championships got under way on 16 July on a soggy cricket pitch in Norfolk. The event, first held more than 25 years ago, has become an annual fixture. Competitors from across the country bring their own snails, each marked with a number because, as the organisers admit, "One garden snail looks very much like another." This year, Zoomer, a local mollusc, triumphed over 120 competitors. *Sunday Telegraph, 17 July 2011*.

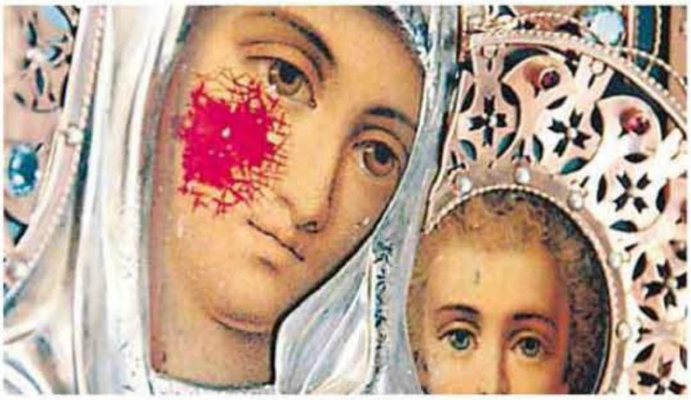
MARTIN ROSS

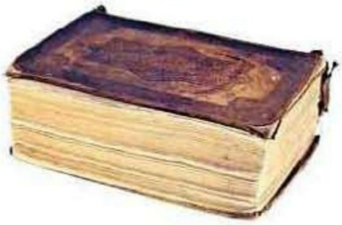
# Journey to the east

## News stories translated by *FT*'s man in Romania, Iosif Boczor

### PROGNOSTIKON

A copy of the *Prognostikon* (below, centre), a small book by Jan Latosz, has been discovered at the National Ostroh Academy, a self-governing research institute in Ostroh, a city in western Ukraine. Jan Latosz (1539–1608) was a Polish astronomer, astrologer, doctor and professor at Jagellonian University in Cracow, the oldest university in Poland, expelled for criticising the Gregorian calendar. Later he taught mathematics and astronomy at Ostroh Academy, founded in 1576 by Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski, a Ruthenian nobleman. Latosz's grave at the local cemetery was destroyed by Soviet authorities in 1960. The current institute was founded on the same site as the old academy, opening in 1994. Two other copies of the *Prognostikon* are preserved in Warsaw and Krakow. The book foretells many cataclysms after 2511 and states that the world will end in 3036. A new edition in Ukrainian will appear at the end of this year. Translating it is difficult because it was written in "barbaric" Latin. *news.ru.ua, pl.toluna.com, 6 May; Super Express (Poland), 8 May 2011.*





### BLEEDING ICON

In 2006, at a little church near Volgograd, a red spot appeared on an icon of the Virgin Mary (above). The icon was wiped clean each evening but the spot kept re-appearing and growing larger. On 7 December 2010 it covered the icon's left cheek. "The Blessed Virgin warns us against blind hate," said the church's priest, Father Artemiy. "Many Russians forget that Russia is a multinational country and all the nationalities are our brethren." *Zhizhn (Russia), 15 Dec 2010.*

> **The spot kept re-appearing and growing larger**

### BLOOD-DRINKER

Last spring and summer, a predator or predators, the size of a large dog with sharp teeth and a "piercing glance", terrorised some settlements in the South Urals. It (or they) mutilated sheep, rabbits, chickens, and sows. "One evening, I had a glimpse of a dreadful-looking creature," said Nikolay Legintzev. "It was standing on its hindquarters. I ran into a greenhouse and stood there until morning. Later I found a rabbit. Its blood was sucked out." Nobody could catch the creature because it ran very quickly. The shepherd dogs did not bark when it appeared. Some zoologists said it was a mutant. The report called it "chubacabras". *Express Gazeta (Russia), 24 June 2011.*

### GUIDE CAT

Morzena Galecka, 41, from Siedlicz in Poland, is very proud of her cat, Miki, for taking care of Pegi, a 10-year-old dog, after he had gone blind, even though the dog used to chase him. Pegi purrs near his erstwhile tormentor and stays with him all day (below). When Pegi wants to go into the garden or into the street, Miki acts as guide cat. *Super Express (Poland), 20 Oct 2009*. For a similar case in Middleburg, Pennsylvania, see **FT237:9**.

### CLOISTERED TWINS

A pair of 35-year-old twins have not left the parental house at Kezarvar in the county of Cluj, Romania, for 10 years. When some neighbours informed the police, they visited the twins with a psychologist. "We don't want to leave our house," they said. "We are ashamed because we failed at an examination 10 years ago." Some neighbours and the psychologist believed that their despotic father keep them in captivity. *Realitatea.net (Romania), 8 June 2011.*

# New SHC case?

## Another mysterious fatality in Ireland

On New Year's Eve 2010, nine days after the mysterious fire death of Michael Faherty in Co. Galway on 22 Dec [**FT281:14–15**], another possible death by Spontaneous Human Combustion occurred in Ireland. A burnt stump of a leg was pretty much all that remained of Elizabeth McLaughlin, a 50-year-old mother of three, found on the floor of her sitting room in Carndonagh, Co. Donegal, around 11am on 31 December. She was so badly burnt that she had to be identified by her dental records and DNA from a hairbrush. At the inquest in November 2011, Kevin Loftus, the dead woman's nephew, described how he smelled smoke, entered the house by an upstairs window, and saw a dead cat lying on the landing. "I kept looking for my aunt and I discovered two more dead cats lying on the floor," he said. Then he came upon his aunt's shoe and what was left of her leg. An empty vodka bottle was lying nearby and the room was smoke-damaged.

"There was a high level of cyanide in the blood stream and carbon monoxide in the atmosphere, which is not normally there," said the Donegal Coroner, Dr John Madden. "There was talk of spontaneous human combustion. I did a little research and that probably is an urban myth, but when I saw the remains, it did come to mind. There was little damage to the surrounding area. I believe the clothes acted like a wick on a candle – there was the complete destruction of the body but the fire did not spread." (Shortcomings of the wick hypothesis were enumerated in the previous *FT* report.) "It seems to me to be spontaneous human combustion, which I know is unusual," said Harry Masterson, the partner of the deceased. "It was just terrible. I would not wish it on anyone." What part the three dead cats played in the drama is not explained. The jury returned a verdict of death by fire. *Irish Independent, 1 Jan; [RTE] 11 Nov; Irish Daily Mail, Irish Daily Mirror, Irish Times, 12 Nov 2011.*

- What *FT* believes to be a novel theory for SHC was recently advanced by Professor Brian J Ford in *Laboratory News* (8 Nov 2011) and might account for some, though not all, supposed SHC cases. He dismisses the wick hypothesis as unsatisfactory: "The idea that melted fat can burn on clothing like wax on a candle-wick doesn't fit the reports – it would take ten or twelve hours to burn away, whereas victims are observed to burst into fire… Let me advance a better explanation. The cue comes from the coroner's account of Michael Faherty, who reported that the dead man had been diabetic [**FT281:14–15**]. Many of the victims of SHC have been obese, and obesity can trigger Type 2 diabetes. The disordered metabolism results in ketone bodies, like acetone; indeed the tell-tale odour on the breath is often indicative of the disorder. Parents have been advised for years to suspect their children of glue-sniffing if solvents can be detected on the breath – and I hate to think how many families have had their lives ruined through a failure to recognise that the body can naturally produce acetone. It is a highly inflammable gas: as little as 2.6 per cent in air can explode and its flashpoint is –17.8°C. It can also cause flashback, where a trail of methane can lead ignition back to the source. Acetone is miscible with lipids and could surely render body fat – itself combustible – into a highly inflammable compound.

"In my view, this offers the perfect explanation. A patient experiences ketosis; acetone and its allies form a reserve in the fatty tissues of the body and collect in gaseous form under the clothing; the patient is thus potentially inflammable. A static spark from fabric or combing the hair could set off fierce combustion. The energy required to trigger an explosion of gaseous hydrocarbons is as little as 0.02 mJ, which falls below the threshold of human perception, whereas static sparks from clothing can produce a painful jolt.

"The reported cases support my proposal perfectly. Many of the victims have high levels of body fat, which provide the fuel depot and the likelihood of ketosis. The relatively fat-free extremities often survive the conflagration relatively intact, likewise the heart and intestines. The areas that are consumed are centred on the abdomen, which is where primary fat deposits accumulate. And – in an era before static sparks from synthetic fibres – acetone-rich fat could likely spontaneously combust. The auto-ignition temperature of acetone is only 465°C.

"This is a proposal that should now be investigated. Meanwhile, what should you do if experiencing ketosis? I'd advise you to wear loose clothing. Avoid wearing artificial fibres – and don't smoke."

*FT* reader Felix Flicker suggests another factor to consider in apparent SHC cases: incontinence. "As noted on an episode of *QI*," he writes, "dried urine-soaked material is explosively flammable, used by the military throughout history for the purposes of constructing makeshift incendiary devices."

## SIDELINES...

### ROMAN BEAR FOUND

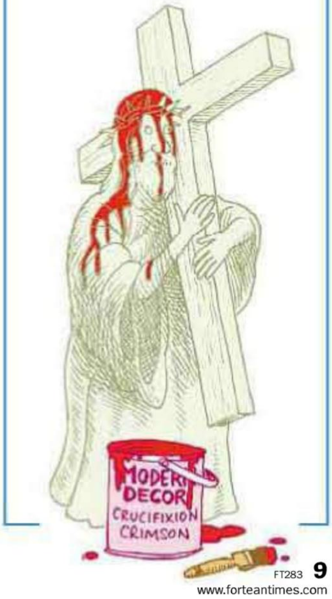
Teddy bears were regarded as a 20th-century invention (inspired by US President 'Teddy' Roosevelt) – until a carving of a small bear made from jet was found in the grave of a child in Malton, North Yorkshire, dating from AD 400, one of 29 child graves near an important imperial fort in the town. It is thought the bear was left to protect the child in the afterlife. *Metro, 26 Aug 2011.*

### GIANT METEORITE

What could be the third-largest meteorite ever found has been discovered almost 10,000ft (3,000m) up in the Altai Mountains separating China from Mongolia. Zhang Baolin, a meteorite expert at the Beijing Observatory, believes it is an "iron" meteorite from a core of an ancient planet or asteroid destroyed 4.5 billion years ago during the birth of the Solar System. He estimates its weight as 25 to 30 tons. *D.Telegraph, 28 July 2011.*

### PAINT, NOT BLOOD

Tricksters poured red paint over a statue of Jesus in Polanka, Poland, causing excitement among the faithful, who declared the "blood" a modern miracle after seeing it dripping from the crown of thorns. The perpetrators could face three years' jail. *Metro, 16 Sept 2011.*



MARTIN ROSS

## SIDELINES...

### LEPRECHAUN TROUBLE

Farmers in the Argentinean province of Catamarca were hunting for a leprechaun accused of ruining harvests. "It was short like a dwarf and I've seen it and spoken to it," said Cosimus Behana, 35. "I wasn't drunk or drugged. We really are cursed." *Metro, 26 Sept 2011.*

### KIDNEY FOR iPAD

A 17-year-old student from Huashan City in China's Anhui province, surnamed Zheng, saw an online advert offering money to organ donors. Illegal agents organised the removal of his right kidney and paid him £2,000, with which he bought an iPad 2 and a laptop computer. As his health deteriorated, he regretted the transaction. *Shanghai Daily, 2 June 2011.*

### POSSESSED

Police in Cambodia arrested a 26-year-old man in Phnom Penh's Sen Sok district on 22 August. He had threatened to stab his neighbours with a sword and destroy their property, but claimed he was possessed by a ghost. Later he was released as no one had been injured and he agreed to pay compensation. *Phnom Penh Post, (Cambodia), 25 Aug 2011.*

### SPENDING A PENNY

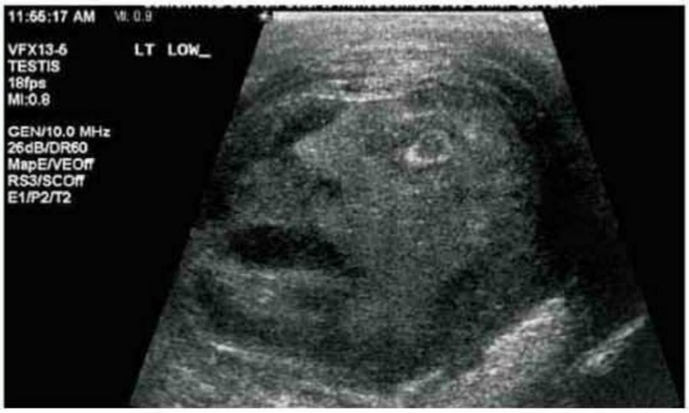
The keys to the men's first class lavatory on board the *RMS Titanic* were expected to fetch more than £50,000 when they came up for auction in Devizes, Wiltshire. *D.Telegraph, 25 May 2011.*

### BLAMING HIS BLOOD

Japan's post-tsunami reconstruction minister was forced to resign on 5 July after insulting officials during a calamitous visit to a disaster zone. Ryo Matsumoto, 60, had been appointed to the job only a week earlier. He blamed his indelicate behaviour on his type-B blood, which made him abrasive and outspoken. He was tapping into the popular Japanese belief that blood types dictate personality traits [**FT112:13**, **261:14**]. *Irish Times, 6 July 2011.*

# MEDICAL BAG

A FACE IN AN ULTRASOUND IMAGE, CONJOINED TWINS SUCCESSFULLY SEPARATED, ODD EATING CONDITIONS



**ABOVE:** This apparent face showed up in a tumour patient's scan.

### GHOUL ON HIS GOOLIES

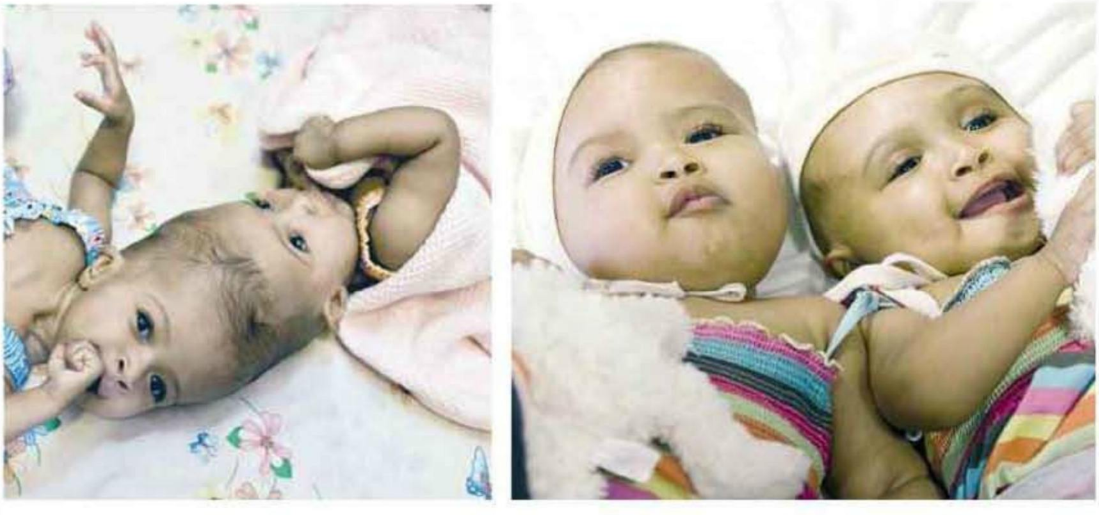
When the scrotal ultrasound of a 45-year-old patient with severe testicular pain and a possible malignant tumour revealed the image, urologists at Queen's University, Ontario, wrote a report in the September issue of *Urology*, the official journal of the International Society of Urology. "The residents and staff alike were amazed to see the outline of a man's face staring up out of the image, his mouth agape as if the face seen on the ultrasound scan itself was also experiencing severe epididymo-orchitis," wrote the urologists, G Gregory Roberts and Naji J Touma. "A brief debate ensued on whether the image could have been a sign from a deity (perhaps 'Min', the Egyptian god of male virility); however, the consensus deemed it a mere coincidental occurrence rather than a divine proclamation." The patient underwent an orchiectomy, or testicular removal, and the mass proved benign. *Chronicle of Higher Education, via telegraph.co.uk, 31 Oct 2011.*

**Doctors were amazed to see a man's face staring at them**

### TRICKY SEPARATION

A team of 25 British specialists have successfully separated twins joined at the head in one of the most complex medical procedures ever attempted in the UK. Rital and Ritag Gaboura were born by cæsarean section in Khartoum, Sudan, on 22 September 2010 with the tops of their skulls fused together, a rare condition with a survival rate of one in 10 million. They were flown to London in April 2011 and over four months underwent four operations at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, paid for by the British children's charity Facing the World. Conjoined twins occur in about one in every 100,000 live births. Between three and five per cent of cases involve a fused skull, known as craniopagus twins, and of those most are stillborn or survive less than 24 hours.

Rital and Ritag, whose parents are both doctors, were born with one of the most serious forms of the condition – they shared blood vessels and there was significant blood flow between their brains. Ritag supplied half her sister's brain with blood, draining most of it back to her own body to re-oxygenate – which meant that her tiny heart was doing most of the work; the strain was putting her in mortal danger. Their condition posed a huge risk during

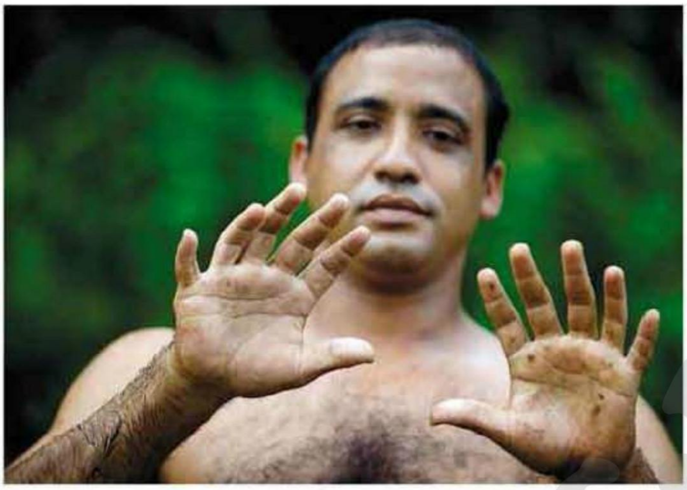


**ABOVE:** Conjoined twins Rital and Ritag, before and after they were successfully separated in a series of four operations.

PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES / AP / FACING THE WORLD

surgery, as any significant drop in blood pressure could cause brain damage. The girls were fully separated on 15 August. So far, the signs are good, with both reacting to stimuli just as they did before surgery; but it will be months if not years before it is known if they have any long-term problems. They were expected to return to Sudan soon and faced further plastic surgery on their skulls. Their parents said they would have two birthdays, one to mark their birth and one to mark their separation.

Bangladeshi girls Krishna and Trishna, now five, were the last craniopagus twins to be successfully separated – in Melbourne, Australia, in 2009. *Mail on Sunday, 18 Sept; Independent, 19+20 Sept; Sun, 19 Sept 2011.*



PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES / AP / JAVIER GALEANO

## DIGITAL BOUNTY

Yoandri Hernandez Garrido, 37 (above right), has six perfectly formed digits on each hand and six impeccable toes on each foot. His nickname veinticuatro ("twenty-four") is a term of endearment. He makes a living climbing palm trees to harvest coconuts and posing for photographs in Baracoa in eastern Cuba. Polydactyly is relatively common, but it is rare for the extra digits to be so perfect. *Irish Examiner, 29 Aug 2011.*

## POST-PRANDIAL BALLOONING

Kerri Dowdswell, 23, from Cannock, Staffordshire, can sit down to lunch a trim size 10 but soon her stomach is so bloated that people think she is about to give birth. It shrinks back to normal within hours, but doctors have no idea what causes the bizarre bloating, despite studying her for a decade.

"It's really embarrassing," said Ms Dowdswell, who has to wear maternity trousers to eat. "There seems to be no rhyme or reason behind what causes my stomach to expand. Sometimes it's when I eat a big meal but other times I can just nibble on a biscuit or a piece of fruit and my trousers suddenly don't fit. I've learned to live with it and I really have to see the funny side. My friends and family call it my 'food babies'."

The problem began at puberty, but has worsened the older she became. Doctors first believed she had was reacting to gluten, but she continued to bloat despite removing all wheat products from her diet. She also underwent tests for irritable bowel syndrome – known to cause bloating – but they were negative. "I was convinced it was something I was eating that caused it, so I cut loads of different food groups [from] my diet. I spent about a year living as a vegan, but it didn't help and I never got to enjoy my food. I decided as it wasn't actually causing me any pain, I might as well eat the foods I enjoy, so I eat what I like now and don't deprive myself. Sometimes it comes up instantly, within about 15 minutes of eating, but other times it takes a few hours, and always takes a few hours to go down." *Metro, 4 Aug 2011.*

CATERS NEWS / RACHEL ADAMS

## FOREVER THIN

Carole French, 50 (left), is one of only two people in the world to be diagnosed with a muscular disorder that means her body can't store fat. No matter how much she eats, her weight remains 6 stone (84lb / 38kg). She is so thin she has to wear children's clothes because size-zero outfits hang from her tiny frame. She was born an average size, but by the age of 13 she weighed just 3st 13lb (55lb / 25kg). "Since I was a teenager, people have assumed I was anorexic, but nothing could be further from the truth," said the mother of two from Oldham, Greater Manchester, who is 5ft 4in (1.6m) tall. "I eat like a horse… It took doctors a year to diagnose me with muscular fibrositis disproportion. I'm constantly exhausted and I'm likely to develop osteoporosis and arthritis. There's no cure – I've just had to learn to live with it." *Metro, 26 Aug 2011.*

## SIDELINES...

### WHAT AN ASS!

Sunday Moyo, 28, was arrested in the town of Zvishavane in Zimbabwe on 23 October and charged with bestiality. At his trial, he told the court that he hired a prostitute who changed into a donkey during the night and he was now "seriously in love" with the animal. "I think I am also a donkey," he said. *D.Telegraph, 27 Oct 2011.*

### TRAFFIC JAM

A lorry loaded with six tons of apricots caused a 12-mile (20km) traffic 'jam' after it crashed in flames and left a sticky mess over Austria's main motorway. The A1 from Vienna to Salzburg was closed for eight hours at the start of a bank holiday weekend. *Metro, 15 Aug 2011.*

### BALKAN ALIENS

Serbia's Statistical Office included a new section for extraterrestrials in last April's census. Space visitors were able to list themselves as ETs/ aliens but didn't have to give details of gender, religion or ethnicity. *Metro, 14 Dec 2010.*

### FISH ON CHOCOLATE

Staff at London's Sea Life Aquarium was mystified when their newly acquired exotic Asian fish refused to eat until they discovered that its previous owners fed it entirely on Kit Kat chocolate wafers. Gary, a giant gourami weighing 4kg (8.8lb), is now on a fruit-based diet. "I've never heard of a fish being fed chocolate," said its handler, Rebecca Carter. *[R] 3 Aug 2011.*

CHOCOLATE
YUMMY

MARTIN ROSS

## SIDELINES...

### DRAWN TO ITS NAME?

A pet Australian bearded dragon lizard escaped near Seaton, Rutland, in September and turned up a month later at the local George and Dragon pub. *Sun, 5 Oct 2011*.

### STROKES OF LUCK

In July, golfers Ross Roger and John Downie, both aged 13, hit their first holes-in-one – from the same tee, one after the other – on the 15th green at a club in Milngavie, near Glasgow. Three weeks later, Alan Domingo landed two holes-in-one on a single round at Hawick Golf Club in Roxburghshire, Scotland – at the 132m (433ft) 8th hole and the 180m (590ft) 13th. *Metro, 19 July, 9 Aug 2011*.

### FOREIGN BODY

Doctors in China removed a 6cm (2.4in) piece of broken plastic chopstick from a woman's right eye socket – after 11 years. Ci Yang had been to hospital many times with eye infections, before a CAT scan was taken and the object discovered. She recalled slipping at home in 2000 and her face hitting the dining table. *MX News (Sydney), 14 July 2011*.

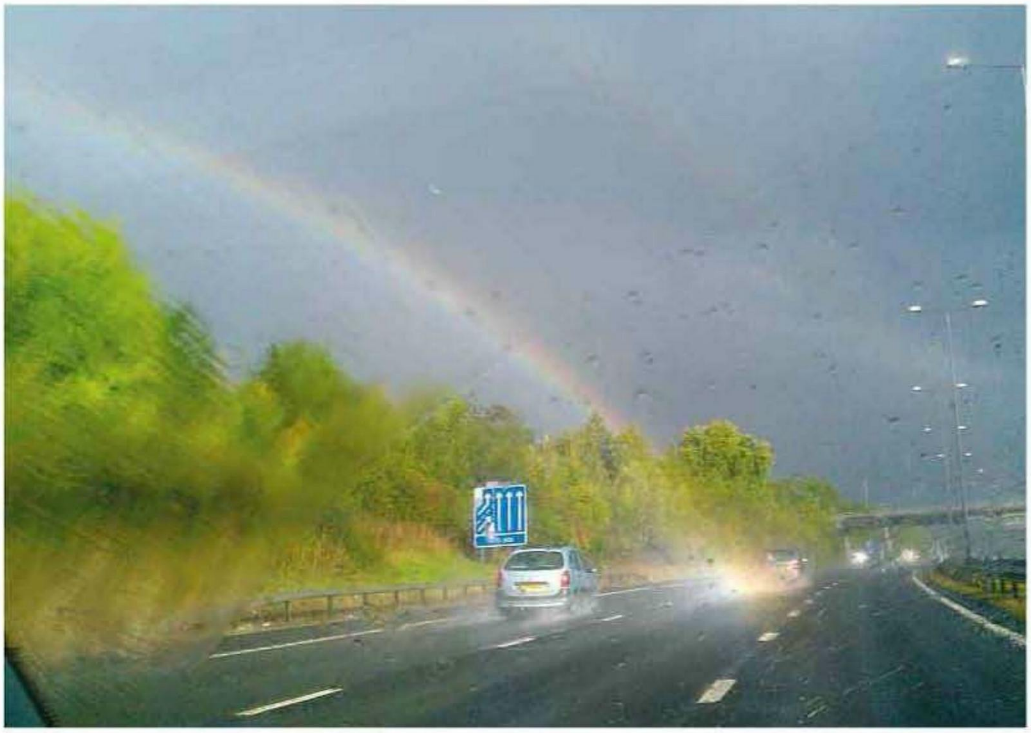
### NOT PORPHYRIA

A review of George III's medical records by the Institute for Archæology and Antiquity at the University of Birmingham has shown that the originators of the theory that the king suffered acute porphyria had cherry-picked signs and symptoms, and the diagnosis cannot be sustained. A rare form of manic-depressive illness called unipolar mania now seems the preferred diagnosis. *Clinical Medicine 2011;11:261–4, via BMJ; Independent, 3 Sept 2011*.

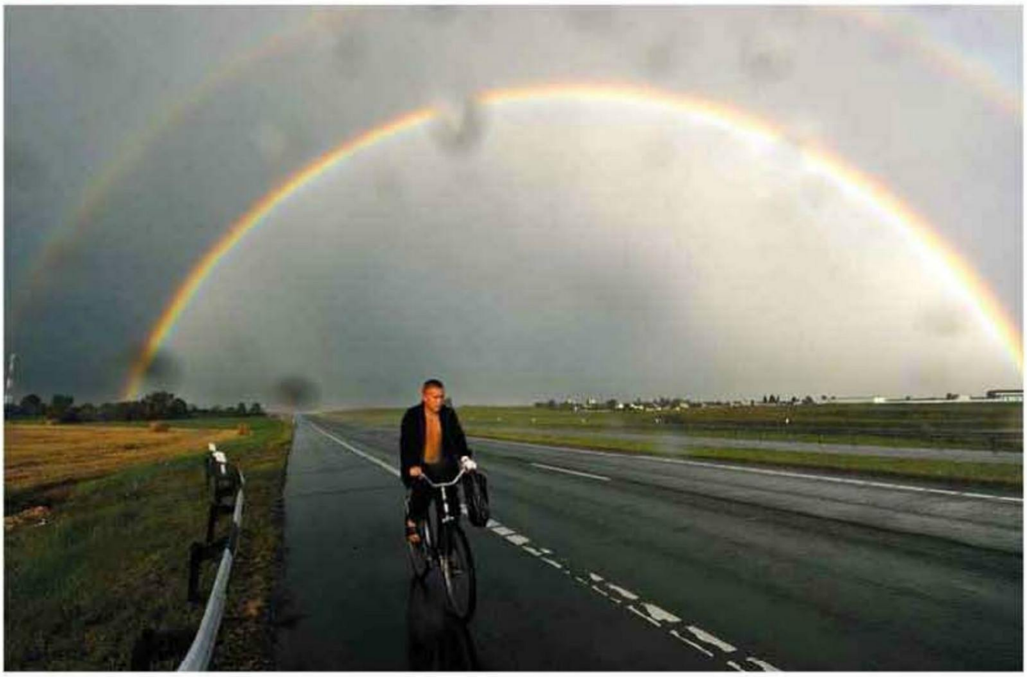
### SLUG STOPS TRAFFIC

A slug brought cars to a standstill on 9 September when it crawled into a traffic light and shorted the circuit board. The fried mollusc was found in the control box by engineers called out to the busy junction in Darlington, County Durham. *Eastern Daily Press, 15 Sept 2011*.

## SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOWS



JANICE THOMAS



GETTY IMAGES AFP / VICTOR DRACHEV

### RAINBOW'S END

It's not often that a camera captures the point where a rainbow 'lands' on Earth. The top photo shows one which touched down on the M25 motorway in Surrey last September. *D.Mirror, 22 Sept 2011*.

Janice Thomas told *Fortean Times*: "It was taken on the M25 on the anti-clockwise carriageway soon after the A217 Reigate junction on 17 September 2011. I took the picture and my husband was at the wheel. I was snoozing and he pointed out the phenomenon. I was lucky enough to point and shoot without the windscreen wipers interfering and captured the shot. Nobody appeared to be swerving around any pots of gold."

The photo above shows a cyclist seeming to flee a double rainbow stretching across the sky near the village of Stankovo, some 30km (20 miles) west of Minsk, Belarus, on 14 August, 2011.

Website approved
by
Plain English Campaign

# Buying a new car?

## Don't make the wrong choice!

## The website that helps you decide which new car to buy

**Expert reviews in plain English**
New cars rated for practicality, performance, comfort, reliability, safety, value for money and running costs

**Detailed specifications**
Facts and figures for every new car on sale in the UK, plus photos inside and out

**Easy-to-use search engine**
Find your perfect car with our powerful matching engine

**Video test drives**
We show you what each car is really like to drive and to own

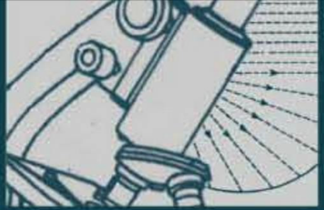
**Tips & advice**
Essential guides that help you save time and money

carbuyer .co.uk
Helping you decide which car to buy

**www.carbuyer.co.uk** from the publishers of

Auto Express · expert REVIEWS · BIZARRE · VIZ · The World of Strange Phenomena ForteanTimes

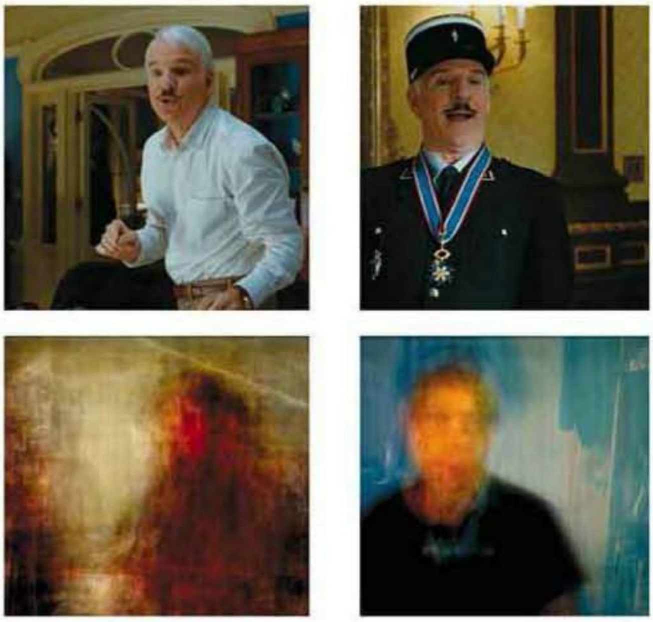
WorldMags.net



MATT PATTINSON

# THOUGHTS ON FILM

I know what you're thinking – or at least, explains **DAVID HAMBLING**, scientists may soon be able to recreate electronically the images flickering across your brain.



COURTESY OF PROF. JACK GALLANT, SHINJI NISHIMOTO / UC BERKELEY

If all our thoughts are reflected by physical activity of the brain, then they could be captured by a suitable device. It's a far-out concept, but researchers headed by Professor Jack Gallant at Berkeley University have demonstrated a system that can recreate moving images from brain patterns – albeit in a surreal and blurry fashion.[1]

Capturing thoughts on film used to be the province of spirit photographers, who transmitted images simply by touching photographic plates. Tomokichu Fukurai, psychology professor at Tokyo University, started on 'thoughtography' in 1911. Fukurai claimed to have successfully captured many psychic images, including one of the far side of the Moon. Inevitably, he was dogged by allegations of fraud. His most successful subject was a Sadako Takahashi – perhaps the inspiration for the Sadako in the highly successful *Ringu* series of horror movies who could create television images by thought power. A paranormal research institute now bears Fukurai's name.[2]

The most famous thoughtographer was Ted Serios [**FT256:54–55**], a self-proclaimed psychic and self-evident alcoholic of the 1960s. Serios claimed to be able to produce images by holding up a small tube or 'gizmo' in front of a camera pointed at his head. He produced a series of impressive pictures to order, and was the subject of a sensational book. This attracted more critical scrutiny, and Serios too was accused of fraud by slipping photographs into the gizmo. After James Randi replicated his thoughtography by non-paranormal means, Serios dropped out of the limelight.

Fortean favourite Nikola Tesla believed that since images on the retina produced thoughts in the brain, so thoughts would create images on the retina "by reflex action". He also told the *Kansas City Journal* in 1933 that he expected to be able to photograph thoughts by this means.[3] Like so many inventions of his later life, Tesla's thought projector was never realised.

Modern electronics make thought capture more feasible. The magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner uses tiny differences in the magnetic properties of molecules to build up a three-dimensional image of oxygenated blood flow in the brain. This allows researchers to see which brain areas are active at any given time, for example while the subject is viewing something. If a small moving object in the left-hand corner of the field of view causes a certain part of the brain to trigger, then examination of brain activity should allow the original stimulus to be recreated.

Previous researchers have managed to correctly identify static images seen by a subject, including numbers and letters.[4] Moving images are more difficult because MRI scans are generally too slow to keep up with the changing patterns.

Prof. Gallant's research team at Berkeley looked at several thousand small volumes of the brain called voxels, each about two millimetres cubed. The subject watched hours of movies while activity was monitored over voxels related to vision. This built up a database indicating the activity corresponding to each moving image. The big challenge was correlating rapidly changing neuronal activity with slower changes in blood oxygen levels. The team succeeded in building a computer model of visual processing, and developed a decoder for matching brain activity back to the nearest known moving image. (Significantly, the three subjects showed similar brain activity for similar images).

**Whatever you can see in your mind's eye can now be shown on a computer**

The team created a vast library of short video clips from YouTube, then took the hundred that most closely matched a given piece of brain activity and averaged them together. The results, as seen on the recreated version of a trailer for *Pink Panther #2*, are pretty amazing. Most moving objects are just approximate brown blurs moving at the right place on the screen (is it an aircraft, a ship or a city skyline?), but recognisably human faces jump out in the close-ups.

It's primitive, but the technology works. Better MRI, smaller voxels and a bigger database will get better results even if the model is not refined. The reconstructed images will steadily get more true to life.

The technology has quite mind-boggling implications. Whatever you see in your mind's eye can now be displayed on a computer screen. However, as the researchers themselves point out, the forensic use of this technology – say, to view a witness's memory of a car accident – is limited by well-known shortcomings in memory. The brain routinely fills in gaps, and memories change over time.

"An accurate read-out of a faulty memory only provides misleading information," the researchers note on their web page. "Therefore, any future application of this technology in the legal system will have to be approached with extreme caution."

Still, the temptation will be strong to hook up a suspect to the MRI and ask them where they hid the murder weapon, or who the leader of their terrorist cell is. One picture might be worth at least a thousand words. Or forteans could get a look at the Bigfoot/UFO/ghost that someone thinks they've seen – though an imaginary sighting wouldn't necessarily appear any different from a real one.

In the longer run, the technology could be used to record dreams, or to literally share memories with others. If you can remember the face but forget the name, this might help. If you can't draw or paint but can imagine something, this will help you get something on the screen.

The technology brings the promise of limitless creativity – now you can make that movie on your own – and the threat of having your very thoughts eavesdropped on. And science will again pass seamlessly from the miraculous to the banal.

## NOTES

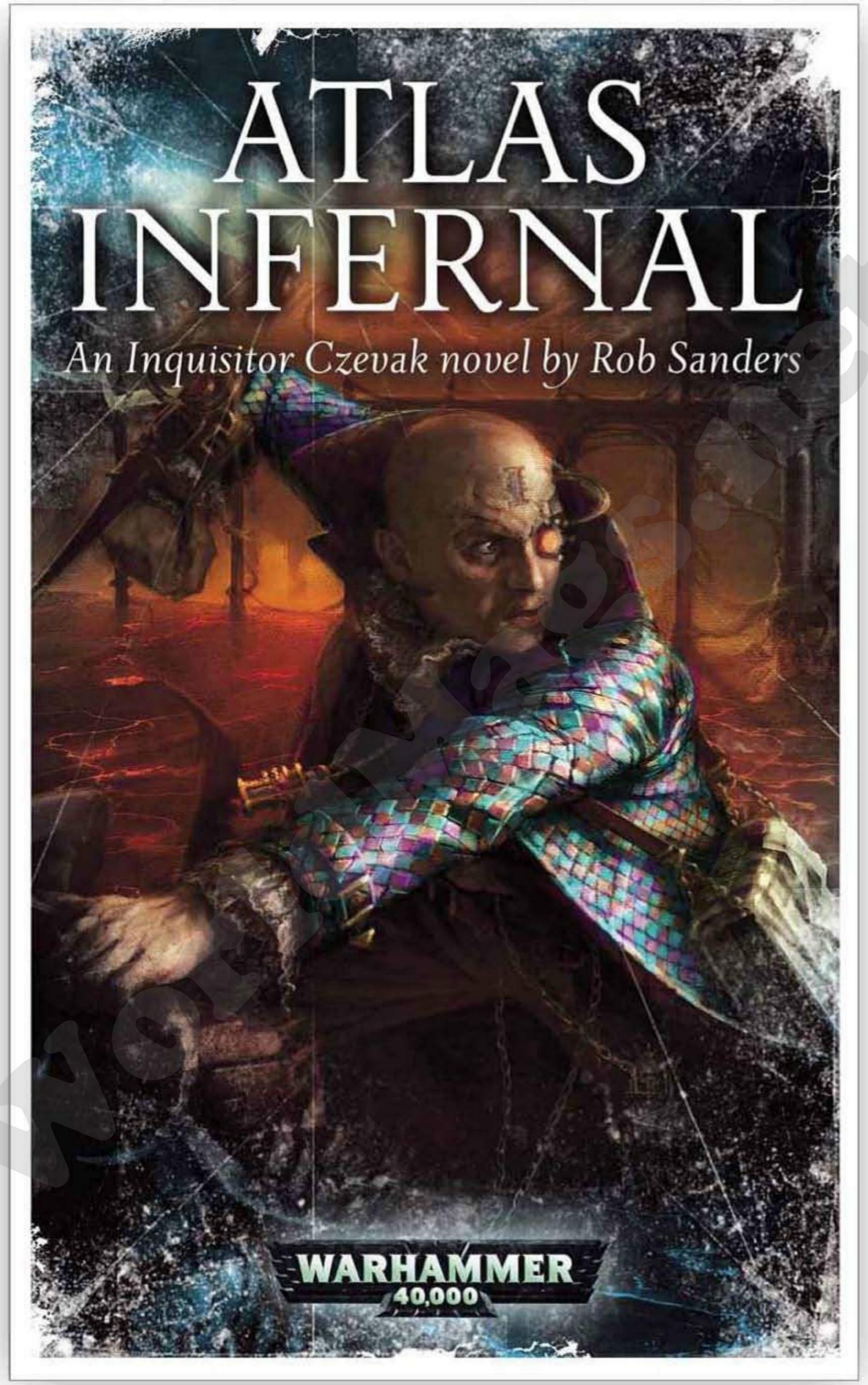
**1** Reconstructing visual experiences from brain activity evoked by natural movies (with video!) http://bit.ly/pb7BdT (sites.google.com/site/gallantlabucb).

**2** http://bit.ly/uP8DMU (www1.odn.ne.jp).

**3** http://bit.ly/uBqlyy (south24.co.uk).

**4** Bayesian Reconstruction of Natural Images from Human Brain Activity: http://bit.ly/19jGPQ (cell.com).

Everything you have been told is a lie...



ATLAS
INFERNAL
An Inquisitor Czevak novel by Rob Sanders
WARHAMMER
40,000

Order from
BLACKLIBRARY.COM
Also available from GAMES WORKSHOP and all good book stores

WorldMags.net

MATT PATTINSON

# GHOSTWATCH

**ALAN MURDIE** continues his re-examination of time-slips with some more classic cases.

## PHANTOM HOUSES

A number of people who have encountered 'time slips' or 'phantom scenery' have supposed that their experience represented a past state of affairs and investigations have accordingly been made by examining the appropriate historical records.

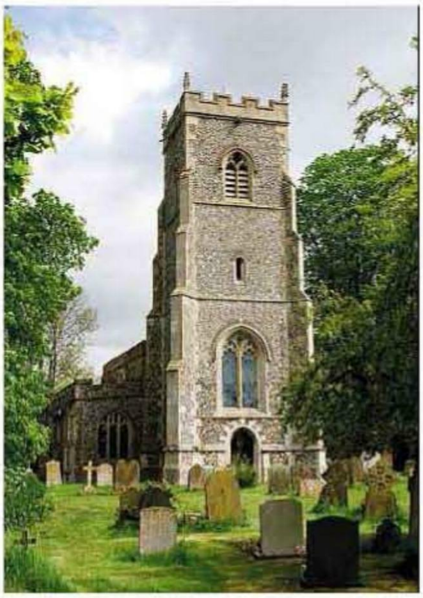
After acting as the editor of a 1988 reprint of Miss Moberley's and Miss Jourdain's *An Adventure*, the writer MH Coleman went on to examine three other cases where people in the 20th century believed they had seen scenery from a previous era. Two of these cases occurred in the West Country in the 1930s and seemed to arise from mislocation but a later case from Hadleigh, Essex, in 1946 puzzled investigators for years.

The Hadleigh time-slip (or 'phantom scenery' case as Coleman preferred) involved a young brother and sister, Bruce and Grace MacMahon, who were walking from their home in Leigh-on-Sea to a creek near Hadleigh. They went along the edge of a wood they had frequently explored and came to a clearing in which stood "an imposing Georgian house with an impressive drive", which they had never seen before. A girl in contemporary dress, accompanied by an Alsatian dog, came down the drive, and disappeared out of sight, over a nearby hill. Later, on mentioning the house to friends in Hadleigh, everyone denied the existence of any such house. Their subsequent searches failed to find any trace of house, drive or clearing; nor did the examination of local maps yield any clues or explanations. As with the Kersey case, the story was not reported for many years, being published in 1961 in an article in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (vol.41, 198) entitled "Collective Hallucinations of Non-Existent Buildings" by Rosalind Heywood.

In 1964, a member of the Society for Psychical Research, Mr RGH Andrews, and his wife set out to solve the mystery. They explored the area but found no clues at the site, nor could they discover any trace of the house on any of the maps available in the local Borough Engineer's office and the Reference Library at Southend-on-Sea.

However, sceptical writer Melvin Harris told an SPR meeting in July 1993 that he had located a house he believed the MacMahons saw in 1946, in a clearing in the woods of Benfleet Downs. This was approached by an obscure path branching off from the one running through woodland between Leigh-on-Sea and the creek at Hadleigh. He provided further details to MH Coleman about how he solved the mystery, having involved Mr and Mrs Andrews to re-investigate the matter as they had done, some 30 years before, but without at first telling them of the house he had discovered. Mr and Mrs Andrews explored the woods without finding any house, until Harris directed them to the site he had found. The explanation for the absence of the property from the local official maps arose from the part of the woodland and the area including the house falling within the boundary of another local authority responsible for compiling local maps. The relevant maps were in fact held at the Hadleigh Library, but unfortunately Mr and Mrs Andrews had not consulted these during their investigation.

MIKE BALDWIN / CREATIVE COMMONS



## Rumours persist of a phantom house around Gypsy Lane

A question mark still hangs over the case in that the house discovered by Harris was not Georgian; Coleman explained this by challenging whether the MacMahons were able to identify the period of the building.

The Hadleigh case demonstrates the importance of local fieldwork and archive research in solving such cases. But extensive investigation by psychical researchers and local historians has still failed to discover an explanation for the case of a phantom house seen at Bradfield St George in Suffolk. The witnesses were a teacher named Ruth Wynne and her 14-year-old pupil Miss Allington, who were both newcomers to the area when they went for a walk through the village on a damp afternoon in October 1926. They were aiming for the local church (above), which they could see plainly ahead of them to their right, but they had to pass through a farmyard to come on to the road. Ruth Wynne wrote:

"Exactly opposite us on the further side of the road and flanking it, we saw a high wall of greenish-yellow bricks. The road ran past us for a few yards, then curved away from us to the left. We walked along the road, following the brick wall round the bend, where we came upon tall wrought-iron gates set in the wall. I think the gates were shut, or one may have been open. The wall continued on from the gates and disappeared round the curve of the road."

Behind the wall and towering above it was a cluster of tall trees. From the gates, a drive led away among these trees to what was evidently a large house. They could just see a corner of the roof above a stucco front "in which I remember noticing some windows of Georgian design". The rest of the house was hidden by tree branches.

Six months later, they retraced their steps, expecting to see the house. They walked through the farmyard as before and stepped out on the road, where suddenly they both stopped in surprise. "Where's the wall?" they queried simultaneously, but it was not there. The road was flanked by nothing but a ditch and beyond the ditch lay a wilderness of tumbled earth, weeds and mounds, all overgrown with the trees which they had seen on their first visit.

They followed the road on round the bend but there were no gates, no drive, no corner of the house to be seen. They were both very puzzled. At first, they thought that the house and wall had been pulled down since their last visit. But instead all they could discover was "a pond and other small pools amongst the mounds where the house had been. It was obvious that they had been there a long time".

In contrast with other cases, Ruth Wynne settled in the area, continuing to live in the village, at the local Rectory, for a number of years. Her pupil, Miss Allington, also stayed in the area for four years, and from her own account, "got to know the country well". Neither of the women ever succeeded in locating the house again. They reported their experience to Sir Ernest Bennett in 1934, and it was published in his book *Apparitions and Haunted Houses* (1939).

In the early 1960s, two members of the Society for Psychical Research, Tony Cornell and Guy Lambert, undertook research and fieldwork, but failed to solve the mystery. Perhaps more significantly, the phantom house was also investigated by a long-term resident of Bradfield St George, the late Mr Leonard Aves. He was a keen local historian who wrote a pamphlet on the history of the area. Interviewed in the local newspaper, the *Bury Free Press*, in 1978, Leonard Aves was quoted as saying: "I have considered that it might have been a mirage, but I have had some experiences of mirages and I believe this apparition too large to be encompassed in one. At least, I have never heard of a mirage that large in this country. Furthermore, for it to have been a mirage would mean that there would have to have been such a house not too far away and we cannot find any traces of one within a reasonable radius."

Most interestingly, Leonard Aves traced another alleged witness to a phantom house in the area. This witness wrote under the *nom-de-plume* of "James Cobbold" and also claimed to have seen a phantom house with a garden in around June 1911 or 1912, at a spot along Kingshall Street between Bradfield St George and the village of Rougham Green. He was travelling with a local butcher, a Mr George Waylett, by pony and trap when the air was filled with a swishing sound and turned very cold. The horse bolted, causing Mr Waylett to fall from the trap, but Cobbold hung on and managed to control the animal. As he did so, he noticed "a double-fronted red brick house roofed with pantiles, three-storeyed, of pronounced Georgian appearance". As he was trying to control the terrified horse, he also noticed six flowerbeds all in bloom in front of the house. James Cobbold also claimed to have seen the house disappear without explanation, for as he looked back, "a kind of mist seemed to envelop the house, which I could still see, and the whole thing simply disappeared, it just went". According to Cobbold, Waylett also saw the house on this and other occasions, and Cobbold's grandfather, a Mr Palfrey, had also seen it in about June 1860.

This account was originally published in *Amateur Gardening* in 1975, and one is tempted to see Cobbold's story as a fictional re-imagining of the 1926 case. However, when Leonard Aves subsequently contacted James Cobbold, he repeated the story as true and agreed to visit Bradfield St George and point out the spot where it happened. In early 1976, he came to meet Leonard Aves and together with Captain D Armstrong (RN) of Rougham, they went to a spot at which Cobbold stated he had seen the house. This was off Kingshall Street, which runs between Bradfield St George and the next village, Rougham, in a field, located nearly opposite a track called Gypsy Lane and "nearly in line with the northern end of Colville's Grove", a small wood.

Rumours still persisted at the end of the 1990s in the Bradfield St George area of occasional appearances of a phantom house around Gypsy Lane. These included a claim that it was seen in the 1970s by the daughter of a previous rector, who lived at the same property as Miss Wynne. She was recalled locally as "having run sobbing into the Bennett Arms pub and told her story, but nothing of the house could be found", according to James Mortlock from the *East Anglian Daily Times*, who also failed to turn up any explanation of the case.

No one has yet been able to find any local building that could have been the subject of a mistaken observation to explain these experiences.

**SOURCES**

MH Coleman: "Phantom Scenery", *Journal of the SPR* 63, 47, 1978.

Sir Ernest Bennett: *Apparitions and Haunted Houses* (1939), Case 102.

Leonard Aves & DW Aves: *The History of Bradfield St George*, 1978.

Paul Chapman: "Close encounters of a chilling kind", *Bury Free Press*, 22 Sept 1978.

James Cobbold: "The Disappearing Garden", *Amateur Gardening*, 20 Dec 1975.

Melvin Harris: "Who are the falsifiers? The paranormal in print" (lecture to the Society for Psychical Research, 15 July 1993).

GW Lambert: " Phantom Scenery", *JSPR* 42,346, 1963.

James Mortlock: "Ghostly goings-on down Gypsy Lane", *East Anglian Daily Times*, 27 Jan 1998.

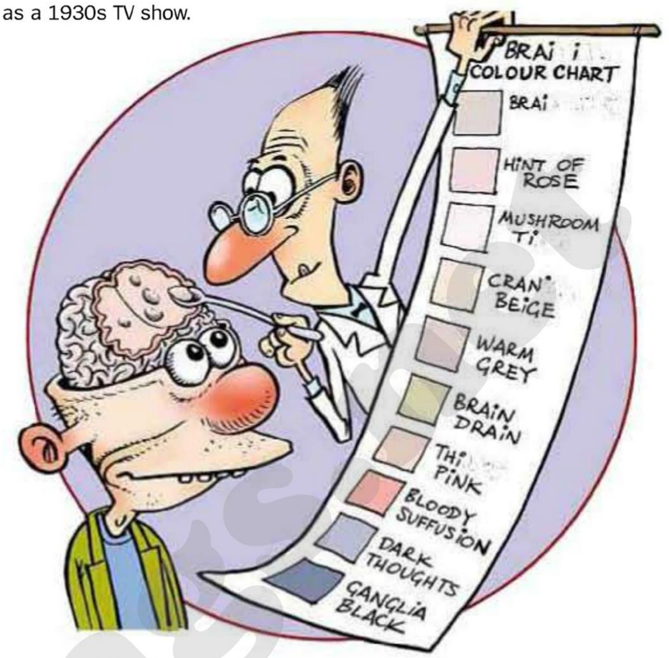
# Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

## 149. LITTLE GREY CELLS

### The myth

The human brain is made up entirely of grey matter. It is about as colourful as a 1930s TV show.



HUNT EMERSON

### The "truth"

"Now in full Technicolor" would be a bit of an exaggeration, but our brains are certainly not monochrome. The living brain is grey (some sources prefer "beige"), black, white and pink (some say "red"). If you were to slice off a cross-section of your brain – an experiment that this magazine cannot endorse – you would see a pinkish mass surrounded by a thin layer of greyish beige. The redness comes from the presence of blood vessels. So-called grey matter consists of various types of cells, and white matter is made up of nerve fibres. Substantia nigra, or black matter, is part of the basal ganglia, and is coloured by neuromelanin. But most of us will only see brains when they've been pickled as laboratory specimens in a fixative such as formaldehyde – which turns the whole organ a uniform, nondescript shade.

### Sources

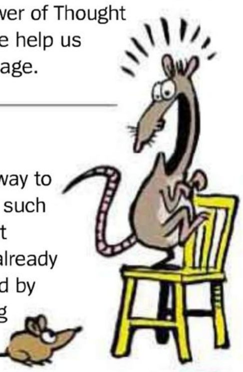
Brian Burrell: *Postcards from the Brain Museum* (Broadway Books, 2004); http://bit.ly/rCMcHO (curiosity.discovery.com); http://bit.ly/cGHnPl (health.howstuffworks.com).

### Disclaimer

You'd think "What colour are brains?" was a straightforward enough question, but there seems to be a range of answers, with every source slightly disagreeing with every other. If your own Cauliflower of Thought is sufficiently large to comprehend all this, please help us get our heads round the subject via the letters page.

### Mythchaser

Is it true, a reader wants to know, that the best way to avoid having rats is to have mice? Are rats really such insular, xenophobic, *Daily Mail*-reading snobs that they will refuse to move into a building which is already mouse-infested – or is this just a story concocted by rotten landlords, trying to avoid the cost of calling in pest control?



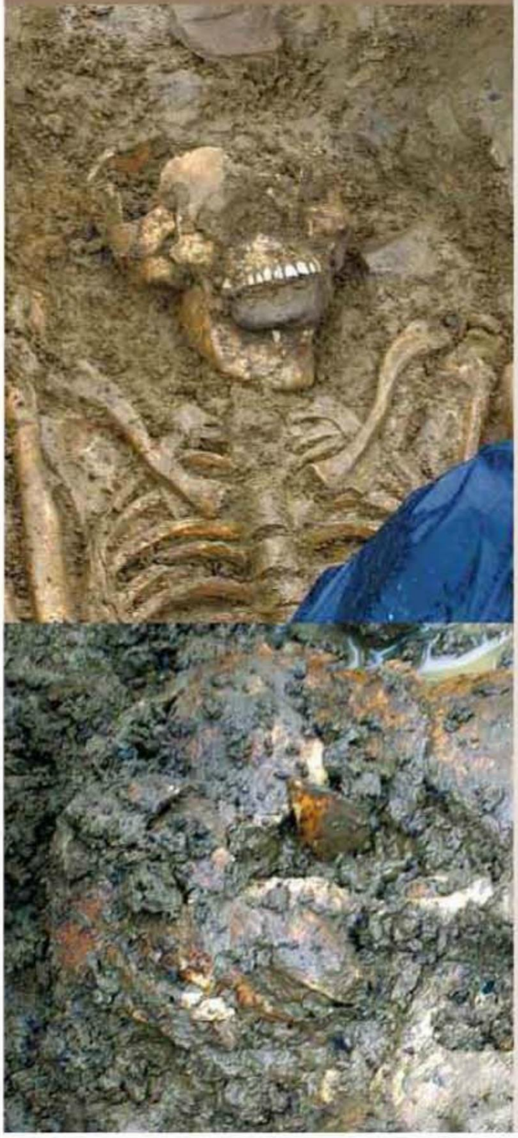
FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:
www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters

MATT PATTINSON

# ARCHÆOLOGY

**PAUL SIEVEKING** on safeguards to keep the dead from straying, Viking finds in Scotland and Ireland, and evidence of Palæolithic seafaring in the Mediterranean.

## ‘ZOMBIE’ GRAVEYARDS



BOTH PIX: CHRIS READ

Archæologists from the Institute of Technology of Sligo in Ireland, investigating an 8th-century graveyard overlooking Lough Key, Co. Roscommon, have discovered the remains of two men placed side by side with tennis ball-sized rocks placed in their mouths. One was aged between 40 and 60, and the other between 20 and 30. According to Chris Read, who led the Royal Irish Academy-funded dig, ‘deviant burial’ took place when the people feared that the deceased would rise from the grave and terrorise them. Such burials are sometimes associated with demonic possession and the revenants or the ‘walking dead’ were often outsiders or misfits. In ancient Ireland, the mouth was seen as the route by which the spirit entered and left the body; hence the reason for placing a large rock in the mouth. “Sometimes the soul could come back to the body and reanimate it, or else an evil spirit could enter the body through the mouth and bring it back to life,” said Mr Read. “In this case, the stones in the mouth might have acted as a barrier to stop revenants from coming back from their graves.” *(Irish) Sunday Independent, 25 Sept 2011.*

In 2009, a woman’s skull was found on an island near Venice in a 1576 plague pit with a large stone in its mouth. This was explained as a way of preventing the woman from feeding on the bodies of other plague victims and rising from the dead to attack the living [**FT249:18**]. Elsewhere in Italy, an alternative method for preventing the dead from wandering abroad has been discovered – and reported on the same day as the Irish story above. The remains of two women aged between 25 and 30, dated to the 13th century, were unearthed from shallow graves near the sea at Piombino near Lucca in Tuscany. One had seven nails in her jaw as well as another 13 surrounding her skeleton.

“I’m convinced [that] the woman was a witch,” said Alfoso Forgione from L’Aquila University, in charge of the dig. “She was buried in bare earth, not in a coffin, and she has no shroud either. Intriguingly, other nails were hammered around her to pin down her clothes. This indicates to me that it was an attempt to make sure the woman did not rise from the dead and unnerve the locals who were no doubt convinced she was a witch with evil powers.

“The second skeleton we have found was buried in a similar fashion, but this time we found 17 dice around her – 17 is an unlucky number in Italy and also dice was a game that women were forbidden to play. The way the bodies were buried would seem to indicate some form of exorcist ritual and the remains will be examined to see if we can establish a cause of death.” One mystery is why the women were buried close to the site of an 800-year-old church. Prof. Forgione suggested that they came from influential families who could overcome objections to burial in consecrated ground. *dailymail.co.uk, 25 Sept 2011.*

**LEFT:** Two of the skeletons found in Co. Roscommon, Ireland. The stones in their mouths were apparently to prevent the deceased rising from their graves.

### VIKING DISCOVERIES

The first intact Viking boat burial ever found in mainland Britain, thought to date to about AD 1000, has been uncovered in the Scottish Highlands. The grave, on the west coast’s remote Ardnamurchan peninsula, contained the remains of a high-status Viking buried with an axe, a sword with a decorated hilt, a spear, a shield boss and a bronze ring pin. Of the warrior himself, only two teeth and some bone fragments were left. About 200 rivets, some with splinters of wood attached, were the remains of the boat he was laid in, which was 16ft (5m) long and 5ft (1.5m) wide. Other finds in the

PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES / PA WIRE / ANDREW MILLIGAN

**RIGHT:** The sword from the Viking burial on the west coast of Scotland.

grave included a knife, what could be the tip of a bronze drinking horn, a whetstone from Norway, a ring pin from Ireland, Viking pottery, and dozens of pieces of iron yet to be identified. An Iron Age fort from about the first century AD was found at the same site earlier this year. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, Metro, BBC News, 19 Oct 2011*.

- Meanwhile, across the Irish Sea, test digs at Annagassan, near Castlebellingham, Co. Louth, have confirmed the folk tradition of a Viking settlement that rivalled Dublin in size and importance. Finds included ships' rivets, scrap silver and a tiny weighing scale. The investigation has located the huge fortified settlement of Linn Duachaill, which antiquarians and archæologists had been trying to place since about 1750. "It was founded in 841 and the [15th-century] *Annals of Ulster* tell us it was used continuously over the next 50 years," said Dr Ned Kelly, keeper of antiquities at the National Museum. It was beside the River Glyde, just south of Dundalk Bay, and covered up to 150 acres (60 ha).

"Dublin developed more as a trading town, this appeared to be more of a raiding town," said historian Micheál McKeown, one of those who carried out the field research. "From here they attacked inland, they flattened all the monasteries in County Louth, they went to Armagh three times in one year, they went as far as the Shannon, deep into Longford. So there had to be a great number of Vikings here. I would estimate four or five thousand with up to 200 ships." The poor tides and shallow waters of Dundalk Bay meant the Vikings eventually abandoned Linn Duachaill and began to repair their long ships or 'longphorts' in Dublin. *Irish Independent, Irish Times, 10 Oct; BBC News, 24 Oct 2011*.

### STONE AGE SAILORS

Rough axes and other stone tools found near shelters on the south coast of Crete in the last three years are between 130,000 and 700,000 years old. Since Crete has been separated from the mainland for at least five million years, whoever made the tools must have arrived by sea, a distance of 40 miles (64km) or more. The find indicates that early humans – even pre-human ancestors – have been going to sea for much longer than suspected. Previous artefact discoveries have shown people reaching Cyprus, a few other Greek islands and possibly Sardinia no earlier than 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. The earliest established marine travel in the world was the human migration to Australia starting about 60,000 years ago. *discovery.info, 5 Jan 2011*.

# CLASSICAL CORNER

## FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

## 145. WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

"Of making many books there is no end" – Ecclesiastes 12.12.

(cf. Stuart Kelly, *The Book of Lost Books*, Random House, NY, 2005).

A stark fact: most Greek and Roman literature is lost or fragmented (Byzantine survivals are proportionately higher).

What? For all too easy instance: early Greek lyric poetry; most tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Ditto stage comedies, except a quarter of Aristophanes. Much Hellenistic prose and poetry; all early Roman literature; a large chunk of Livy; slices of Tacitus; virtually all Roman emperors' works; the (down)beat goes on…

(cf. H. Bardon, *La Littérature Latine inconnue*, Paris, 1956, & *Les Empereurs et Les Lettres Latines*, Paris, 1940).

Why? No simple answer. Various factors converge. Lady Luck, of course. Mundane ones include the high cost of book materials (papyrus unique to Egypt, parchment from Pergamum dear and often in short supply), production and prices, consequently few copies in individual and private hands. Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians & the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989) estimates it took 500 calves to make one Bible, 50 for a pocket-sized Virgil, to afford which a teacher would need at least 50 pupils per month. No wonder the average Byzantine's library contained about 25 volumes, and their letters crammed with appeals to borrow.

There were bargains from the used book trade (RJ Starr, *Phoenix* 44, 1990, pp148–58). Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights*, bk9 ch4) found a pile of *Mirabilia* in a Brindisi shop, "torn and dirty from long neglect". Less scrupulous bibliophiles resorted to theft. Libanius (*Oration* 1, para149, 4th century AD) had his priceless Thucydides nicked. Happily, like Polycrates's ring in the fish, he retrieved it from a new student who'd bought it on the literary black market. We may wonder what the senators (Ammianus, *History*, bk28 ch4 para14) were hiding in their libraries "closed like tombs"? – Fort (*Books*, p671) wondered if the alleged newly discovered Livy (quickly debunked) – **FT135:24** – might be "in the collection of a silent, American millionaire".

Fame was no guarantee. Only scraps of Sappho, despite her millennia-long reputation. All Roman satirists hailed Lucilius (2nd-century BC) as their master, yet we have but fragments, usually grammarians' illustrations of linguistic rarities. Other cases abound.

Censorships played their malign roles. Athens banned Phrynichus's tragedy *The Capture of Miletos* for perpetuating national grief. Tiberius suppressed the historian Cremutius Cordus, Nero the satires of Fabricius Veiento. Christians are suspected of expunging the part of Tacitus's *Annals* dealing with Christ's crucifixion. They did destroy (e.g.) the anti-Christian tract of Porphyry, but Julian's got through. Banning and burning of supposed 'heretic' works, e.g. the voluminous Origen, became the chief concern, while a surprising amount of classical 'obscenity' was winked at.

People once blamed the huge losses on the Arab burning of the Alexandria Library in AD 642. But that has been doubted since Gibbon (L Canfora, *The Vanished Library*, 1989). The havoc wrought on Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade (1204) is now prime suspect – the major villain, Count Baldwin, is NOT my ancestor.

There's always the chance of new finds from Herculaneum, Egyptian papyri (Tony Harrison, *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus;* Peter Parsons, *The City of the Sharp-nosed Fish*, 2007), monasteries (e.g. Photius's *Lexicon* at Zagreb, 1959), palimpsests (re-cycled paper) and stray items in libraries, e.g. a supplement to Juvenal's Sixth Satire stumbled on by an Oxford undergraduate, or the Letters of Fronto (1815 & 1823). Irony attends the latter. Antiquity regarded Fronto as a great stylist. His disappointingly flatulent correspondence inspired the epigram "Fronto lost his reputation by being discovered".

Baldwin's select wish-list: Sappho's poems (the sexual issue apart, we are desperately short of ancient female writing); more plays, not just the big names, but (e.g.) Callipedes, also famous for his running-on-the-spot endurance – a PE punishment at my school; the rest of Petronius's *Satyricon*; Suetonius's Lives of Famous Prostitutes; Jokebooks (e.g. 150 by the grammarian Melissus); Memoirs of Roman dictator Sulla, and of Nero's mum Agrippina; Nero's poems – not necessarily as bad as he was; indeed, all the emperors' lost books, above all Claudius's Etruscan and Carthaginian histories, which required a new annex added to the Alexandrian Library (Suetonius, *Claudius*, ch42 para2).

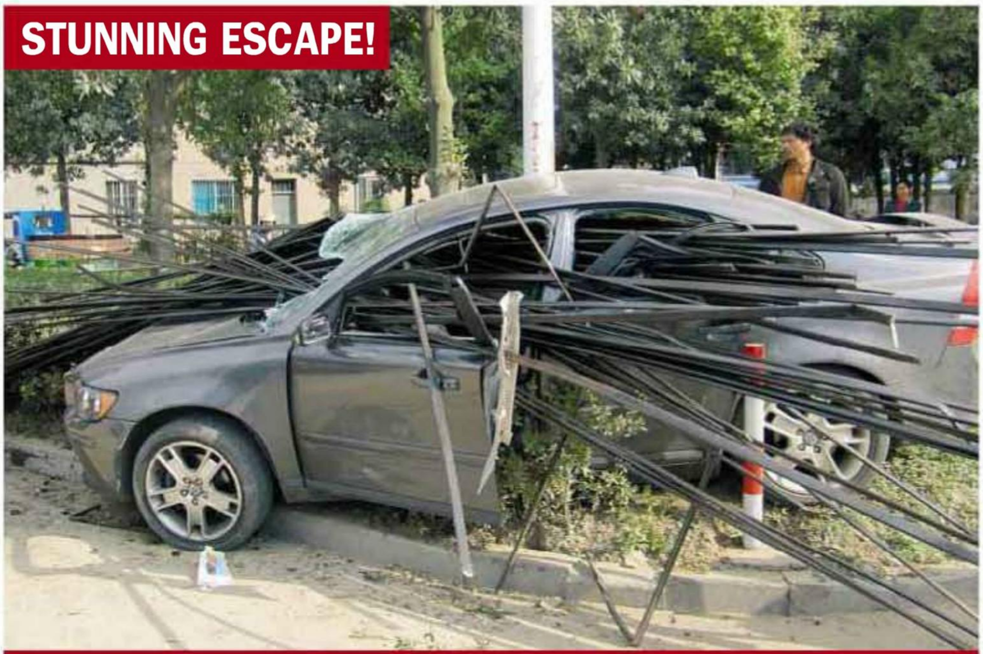
Books I can live without include Chrysippus's 700 tomes on Stoicism, especially syllogisms (give me Lewis Carroll any day) and the 3,500 books ascribed to Didymus Chalcenteros ('Brass-Guts'), also nicknamed 'Book-Forgetter' (Athenæus, *Deipnosophists*, Holy mystery deer, bk4 para139C; Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, bk1 ch18 para19) because he forgot what he'd written and once absent-mindedly ridiculed his own work.

*Habent sua fata libelli* ("Books have their own destines") – Terentianus Maurus, 2nd century AD.

# SURVIVALISTS

A maimed motor plus some safe landings after long falls from high places

## STUNNING ESCAPE!



REX FEATURES / QUIRKY CHINA NEWS

This car was skewered by metal bars in the eastern Chinese province of Zhejiang. Its uninsured driver, who escaped with scratches, was trying to flee police when he crashed into a truck carrying the rods. *Metro, 1 Nov 2011.*

### 220-FOOT BRIDGE-JUMPS

An unnamed 17-year-old youth survived a 220ft (67m) jump from the Golden Gate Bridge on 10 March with nothing more than a few bruises. He is thought to have been trying to impress classmates from Windsor Unified (a school north of San Francisco) on a school trip when he climbed over the railings on the eastern pedestrian walkway and plunged into the icy waters of San Francisco Bay. He was helped to shore by Frederic Lecouturier, 55, who was surfing under the bridge at the time. Just over a month later, a suicidal 16-year-old girl jumped from the bridge and survived. She came to the surface straight away, and a surfer came to her aid and kept her afloat until rescuers arrived. The US Coast Guard said she was "conscious and responsible".

Around 1,400 people have leapt from the bridge since it opened in 1937, and 98 per cent of them have died. Last year alone there were 32 such deaths. It takes four seconds to hit the water and jumpers reach speeds of 80mph (130km/h). Only a handful have ever walked again. If the bone-crushing force of the impact doesn't kill them, they usually drown in the strong currents and freezing temperatures. *D.Mail, 12 Mar, 19 April 2011.*

### 10-FLOOR DROP

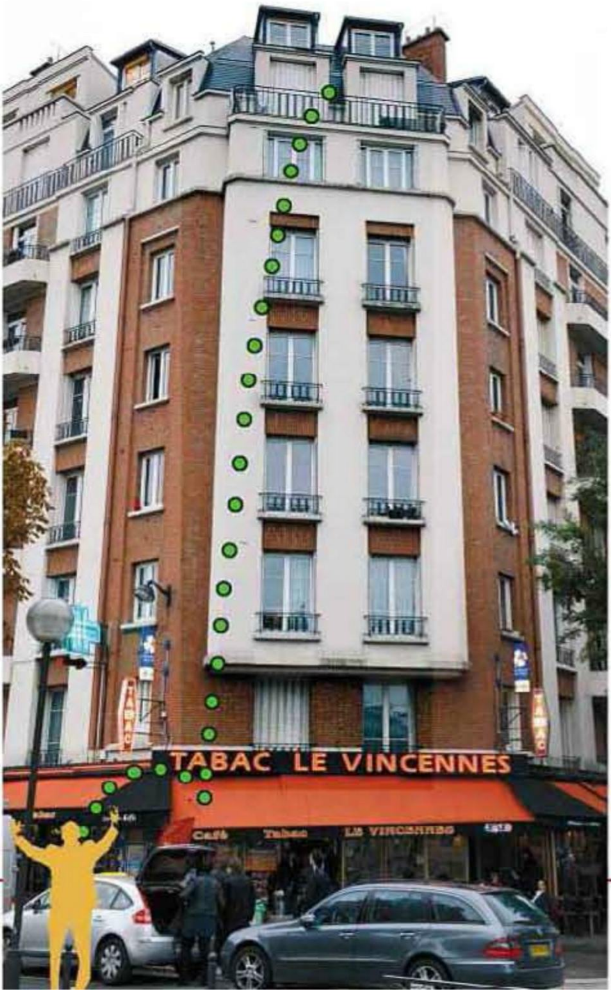
A two-year-old Chinese girl fell 10 storeys from an apartment window, but survived after being caught by a passer-by. The girl, named Zhang Fangyu but known by her nickname Niu Niu, was in the care of her grandmother on 2 July when the woman left the 10th-floor apartment outside the city of Hangzhou, in the eastern province of Zhejiang, to run an errand. Neighbours saw Niu Niu dangling from a window for several minutes, and when she fell, Wu Juping, a 31-year-old mother, "kicked off her high-heeled shoes" and ran to catch the child. The impact knocked Wu out and sent her crumpling to the ground with a broken arm. A doctor at Zheijiang Hospital said that there was no damage to Niu Niu's brain, but her abdomen was swollen, suggesting possible internal injuries. She awoke from a coma after 10 days, and a week after that she was singing songs, suggesting she was well on the way to recovery. *telegraph.co.uk, 4 July; Eve. Standard, 12 July; Irish Independent, 18 July 2011.*

### SEVEN-STOREY TUMBLE

At 8.30pm on 23 May, Jake Evans, 18, was having a drink on the seventh floor of the Torrenova Playa hotel in Magaluf, Majorca, after a night out. "I was in a friend's room on the balcony," he said. "I asked a bloke two floors below for a lighter. He threw it up but I was a bit drunk, leaned out to grab it and went over. I hit each balcony railing as I went down because they are staggered like a staircase." The Liverpool plumber survived a 90ft (27m) plunge before landing on a sun lounger. He fractured his skull and broke his right arm and an ankle, but was lucky to have survived. *Sun, 25 May 2011.*

### 80-FOOT PLUNGE

An 18-month-old boy plunged from a seventh-floor apartment in northeast Paris, fell 80ft (24m), bounced on a café awning and into the arms of a passing doctor. The boy, who was playing games with his four-year-old sister, had apparently



GETTY IMAGES / AFP / MIGUEL MEDINA

climbed through a window and onto a balcony after his parents had gone out.

Philippe Bensignor, the doctor who caught the toddler, was walking by with his wife and son on 1 November 2010. "I was there at the right time," he said. "My son happened to look up and he saw that a little boy was on the balcony and had somehow got through the railing and was playing on the very edge of a vertical drop into the street. I just had time to get across the street and place myself. I said to myself 'whatever happens, I mustn't miss him'. He didn't have a scratch. He cried for a few moments and then climbed down and fell asleep."

The awning on Le Vincennes café (facing, bottom) that broke the fall was only in place because a mechanism had jammed and stopped it from being lowered. The café was closed for All Saints Day holiday and the awning would usually have been down. The toddler's parents were charged with causing injury to a child through neglect, and faced a large fine or a custodial sentence. *Irish Times, 3 Nov; D.Mail, 4 Nov 2010.*

## 30-FOOT FALL

A toddler who fell from the top floor of a four-storey hotel in Florida escaped injury after being caught by a British woman on holiday. Jah-Nea Myles, 16 months, slipped through a balcony railing at the Econo Lodge Inn in Orlando at 11pm on 20 April and fell about 30ft (9m) into the arms of Helen Beard, 44, an NHS manager from Worksop in Nottinghamshire, who was at the pool when she spotted the dangling child. The child slipped from her hands and hit the ground, but despite also suffering a glancing blow from the third-floor balcony as she fell, she was completely unharmed. Helena Myles, 20, Jah-Nea's mother, told police her friend Dominique Holt had been watching over the child in an adjacent hotel room, but had gone to the bathroom when the incident occurred. *BBC News, 22 April; Independent, Sun, 23 April 2011.*

# ALIEN ZOO

**KARL SHUKER** presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden

**ABOVE:** Muntjac deer – as introduced to Britain in the 1800s.

PACKA

## HOLY MYSTERY DEER!

Although Britain is home to six species of wild deer, three of them (Reeves's muntjac, sika, and Chinese musk deer) were introduced here (from Asia) as recently as the 19th century. Before that, according to all the official natural history books, Britain possessed only two native species (the red and the roe), with the third species (the fallow) having been introduced by the Normans in the 11th century. Recently, however, I learnt from Belgian cryptozoologist Eric Joye that Britain's cervine situation may be more complex – and cryptic – than previously realised. According to Eric: "A friend of mine, a professor in Celtic civilisation at Brussels University, told me that he has found in a Gaelic text that in the past four distinct deer species existed in the British Isles: *damh dearg* (the red deer), *damh donn* (the fallow deer), *damh glas* (the roe deer) and *damh dearca* (the deer-of-the-holes). The problem is that nobody among the celtologists knows what is this *deer-of-the-holes*."

The text Eric refers to is 'Vorindogermanische Schichten der irischen Heldensage', by Josef Weisweiler (1954), parts I & II (*Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 24:10–55, 165–197) – with the deer-in-the-holes documented on p43. But what can this mysterious creature be – or have been? Deer do not normally frequent holes – though some small species, such as muntjac, do inhabit dense cover and often move through natural tunnels within this thick undergrowth to escape detection by predators.

Is it conceivable, therefore, that at least for a time, and long before the modern-day establishment in Britain of naturalised muntjac populations resulting from parkland escapees, a deer species of this or a similar nature existed in Britain? If so, it would surely have been introduced from elsewhere, but presumably did not survive for very long – otherwise it would have become much better known and more extensively documented. If anyone can shed light on this intriguing crypto-mystery, we'd love to hear from you. *Eric Joye, pers. comm., 17 Sept 2011.*

## MONKEYING AROUND IN THE MEDIA

In September 2011, media reports announced that a new species of white monkey had been discovered in Sri Lanka – but had it? According to the principal source of this information, the ColomboPage News Desk: "The members of Galle Wildlife Conservation Association say that they have identified a new species of white monkeys [sic] from Sri Lanka's World Heritage site of Sinharaja rain forest." Moreover, the researchers have claimed that it is not an albino. This was clear from the photo accompanying that report, which showed that the form in question has a very dark face. Apparently, the white monkey had been observed in several places within the Sinharaja forest's southern region during a survey.

So far, so good. At the end of the report, however, it was then claimed that this white monkey is actually "a color morph of the southern purple-faced leaf langur". So what exactly is it – a distinct species in its own right, or a non-taxonomic colour variety of the above-named langur species? Fortunately, an additional piece of information in the report provides the likely answer: "The research team has observed 26 monkey troops in the rain forests and home gardens around Galle and Matara districts and found 30 individuals with unusual white color in 14 troops."

The fact that white specimens occur within troops of normally coloured southern purple-faced langurs demonstrates convincingly that the white ones are indeed nothing more than colour morphs of that species rather than a separate taxonomic form. True, it is possible that the troops actually comprise two co-existing species, but this is not common, and the small numbers of white langurs – only 30 in no less than 14 troops – also indicates that this is a rare, freak form of the southern purple-faced langur. DNA studies should provide conclusive identification of the white monkeys, so it is hoped that these will be conducted in the near future. *http://bit.ly/ozs34g (colombopage.com) 11 Sept 2011.*

## BLUE NEWS RE. THE KANSAS BLUE SPIDER

I recently documented the discovery and capture of a bright blue female lycosid wolf spider by Stacia Weilert in her southeastern Kansas garden [Alien Zoo, **FT281:25**]. Feeding and maintaining it in a specially created habitat, Stacia and her husband Brian were thrilled when the spider developed an eggsac, from which, they hoped, numerous spiderlings would soon be hatching. But would they be blue or the normal nondescript brown? The news, via an email from Brian, was not what I had hoped for or expected:

"The spiderlings hatched and were brown. We went away for a few days and when we returned she was dead and so were the babies. During this time, Purdue University had contacted me. I took some photos of her, post mortem, as they requested, and am sending them her body."

I have discussed how infection by an iridovirus can result in freak blue invertebrates [**FT269:23**], which may therefore explain this and other, previously reported, freak blue spiders. But could the viral infection be directly transmitted from parent to offspring? Had the spiderlings been blue, this would not only have demonstrated that an iridovirus infection was responsible but also that it was directly transmissible. As they were not, however, the only hope left for a solution to the mystery of this particular blue spider is if the researchers' investigations can identify the cause of its novel coloration. Once again, I await news from the Weilerts. *Brian Weilert, pers. comm., 23 Aug 2011.*

# NATURE'S ODDITIES

'Star jelly' found across hill and dale, plus an 'alien' piglet and a baby one-eyed monster

## RETURN OF THE BLOB

Blobs of translucent goo, known as 'star jelly' because of a folk tradition that it falls to Earth during meteor showers, were found in the Lake District in late October. "I came across about 10 blobs floating on top of some puddles [on the fells of Patterdale in Cumbria]," said Rob Shepard, 43, who has a holiday cottage there. "They were the size of my foot. I didn't touch the jelly, I just took some snaps." Patterdale village storeowner Tom Driscoll, 53, is another witness. "I was walking with my partner when we came across six or eight piles of the stuff," he said. "My initial thought was that it could be frogspawn, but when I had a closer look I realised this was not the case. I touched it and it had the consistency of frogspawn, but some of the pieces were as big as a person's foot and I didn't think it was anything that a human or animal could make."

Rebecca Robinson found some 'star jelly' on the Yorkshire Moors above Holmfirth in early November. "It's not sticky, it doesn't mark or burn the skin," she said. "It never happens in summer and it's always on marshy, boggy fields. It looks like frogspawn except without the dots. It's weird." A puddle of jelly was also found on Marsden Moor by seven-year-old Ketan Jalota, of Colcar, Huddersfield, while walking with his father Rakesh, who said: "Ketan thinks it comes from outer space."

Dr Hans Sluiman, an algae expert at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, investigated a 2009 jelly find in Scotland, which was linked to the stags' rutting season. "I did discover the jelly is made up almost entirely of water, but wasn't able to find out exactly what it was," he said. "It may be toxic frogs that have been eaten by other animals and then spat out – but nobody knows for sure." *D.Mirror, Sun, 22 Oct; Sunday Express, 6 Nov 2011.*

© CLAUDIAMASSIE.CO.UK

*"When I had taken up what I supposed a fallen star I found I had been cozened with a jelly."* (John Dryden 1679)

'Star jelly' has been reported for centuries. John of Gaddesden (1280–1361) mentions *stella terræ* ("'star of the earth") in his medical writings, describing it as "a certain mucilaginous substance lying upon the earth" and suggesting that it might be used to treat abscesses. A 14th-century Latin medical glossary has an entry for uligo, described as "a certain fatty substance emitted from the earth, that is commonly called 'a star which has fallen'". An English-Latin dictionary from around 1440 has an entry for 'sterre slyme' with the Latin equivalent given as *assub* (a rendering of Arabic ash-shuhub, also used in mediæval Latin as a term for a 'falling' or 'shooting' star).

The Bishop of Cloyne, writing in 1696 (quoted in *Philosophical Transactions* vol.19, p.224), spoke of many such falls in his lifetime in Ireland, and said that this 'bog butter', whatever it is, was highly prized by the local people as a treatment for scalds. In 1958, a strange light was seen to pass over West Meath, Ireland, and land in a field. Those rushing to the spot found a mass of 'bog butter' (*Dublin Evening Herald*, 7 Feb 1958). Instances of such jelly were repeatedly noted in the annual *Report of the British Association* (particularly in R Gregg's great catalogue of "meteorites" in the 1860 volume).

> **"It looks like frogspawn except without the dots"**

A certain Nick Brod told a Texas newspaper in May 1895: "One night about a month ago, we saw a streak of fire fall in my field near my house. It looked like a streak of lightning. Next morning we went where we saw the light and found a string of jelly-looking matter on the ground that must have been about thirty feet [9m] long. It was colorless and about as thick as my arm and when you struck it with a stick it shook just like jelly. As soon as the sun came up it melted away." *Shiner (TX) Gazette, 30 May 1895.*

Translucent jelly was discovered in a garden in Horley, Oxfordshire, on 23 September 1995. "I don't know what it is," said the unnamed householder, "but if I had scraped it all up, there would have been enough to fill a kettle" [**FT84:10**]. More blobs were found at Kempton, Tasmania, on 3 November 1996. "It was queer stuff, white/clear jelly," said Marlene Smith. "We could have got a bucket of it." It was found after a night of thunderstorms that had been preceded by a ball of yellowish fire falling from the night sky witnessed by Marlene's husband Barry. A Kempton farmer noticed more jelly in one of his paddocks; a sample was found to contain microorganisms (but then, bacteria are ubiquitous). [**FT95:15**].

Prof. McKenny Hughes, in *Nature* (23 June 1910), wrote that the notion of falling stars turning into jelly was very common; he claimed he had seen "the rot of the stars" for himself and that the Welsh called it *pwdre sêr* (or *pydredd sêr*). In the north of England it is known as "fairy butter". Attempts to explain it as the gelatinous fungus *Tremella mesenterica* are inconclusive.

To quote Gang of Fort member Mark Pilkington (writing in the *Guardian*, 13 Jan 2005): "Since at least the early 18th century, the most common earthbound explanation for the mystery goo has been that it is something vomited up by birds or animals; the Welsh naturalist Thomas Pennant, writing later that century, considered this the answer. Currently popular is the idea that the grey gloop is frogspawn barfed up by amphibian-eating creatures, though no frogs' eggs have ever actually been identified within it, and most finds are a good deal larger than your average frog. A recent refinement of the concept is that if a frog is swallowed prior to ovulation, its regurgitated egg duct swells dramatically when wet." However, scientists commissioned by *National Geographic* to conduct tests on 'star jelly' samples found in the USA failed to find any DNA, which contradicts 'regurgitation' theories.

On 26 September 1950, four police in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, came across "a domed disk of quivering jelly, 6 feet [1.8m] in diameter, one foot [30cm] thick at

the center and an inch or two near the edge". When they tried to pick it up, it dissolved into an "odourless, sticky scum". This incident inspired *The Blob*, a 1958 alien horror movie set in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, and starring Steve McQueen in his first leading role. (The theme song, "Beware of the Blob", was written by Burt Bacharach and Mack David and became a nationwide hit.) In the film *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* (1978), the alien spores that fell to Earth in a rain shower formed blobs of jelly that grew into flowers that produced the seedpods.

## PORCINE ALIEN

Residents of the remote village of Santa Cruz El Chol in Guatemala believe that a mutant pig with a human-looking head (above) is the work of visitors from outer space, after strange bright lights were spotted in the sky on the night of its birth. The poor animal, one of a litter of 11, was described as looking like a cross between a human and something from the *Alien* movies. "I was shocked," said farmer Laureano Escobar Arias. "It was a really terrifying experience. It looked like some kind of alien creature." Local officials suggested there were more earthly reasons for the pig's appearance. "We don't know for certain, but it could have been caused by a genetic problem or by environmental pollution," one waffled. *[CEN] Metro, 5 Sept 2011.*

## ALBINO CYCLOPS

This albino shark pup (below) with a single eye was removed from the womb of its mother, an endangered dusky shark, caught by Mexican fisherman Enrique Lucero León in the Gulf of California. Biologist Felipe Galván-Magaña of the Interdisciplinary Centre of Marine Sciences in La Paz, Mexico, confirmed that the marine cyclops was not a hoax. "This is extremely rare," he said. "As far as I know, fewer than 50 examples of an abnormality like this have been recorded." Cyclopia is a congenital disorder characterised by the failure of the front portion of the brain to properly divide the orbits of the eye into two cavities. It occurs within the spectrum of brain and face defects known as holoprosencephaly, which in severe cases can result in miscarriage or stillbirth.

In 1982, a baby girl was born in Israel seven weeks prematurely with no nose and a cyclops eye, but lived for only 30 minutes – a case reported in the *British Journal of Ophthalmology* in 1985. In 2005, a kitten born with no nose and a cyclops eye created a stir online. A vet confirmed the kitten's condition; "Cy", as it was known, lived only a day. The remains were sold to the creationist Lost World Museum. *LiveScience.com, 17 Oct; Sun, 19 Oct; (Sydney) D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 20 Oct; Scientific American, 21 Oct 2011.*

PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# KONSPIRACY KORNER

**ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER MAGAZINE, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON...**

### THE CITY'S NOT-SO-HIDDEN POWER NETWORKS

I shared a speakers' table with Tony Gosling a few weeks ago. We had been asked to talk briefly about the powers-that-be in Britain and, as Gosling runs a big website devoted to the Bilderberg group, I assumed that he would talk about them. Thus I concluded, complacently, I didn't need to do much preparation; I would run my usual spiel, that Bilderberg is a talking shop, not the executive committee of world capitalism. I might mention that this is the conclusion reached by the first academic study of Bilderberg, which describes in more detail what we knew already from Bilderberg participants such as Denis Healey, Paddy Ashdown and Will Hutton.[1]

But Gosling surprised me by talking about a famous book, John Robison's *Proofs of a Conspiracy*, or, to give its full title, *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all religions and governments of Europe, carried on in secret meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati and reading societies, collected from good authority*, first published in 1797.[2] That title nicely captures the paranoia in ruling circles in a Europe still echoing to the sound of Madame Guillotine. Reading societies, indeed! I did once try to read that book in my early exploration of the conspiracy theory field. There are no such 'proofs' (how could there be when life then moved at 10 miles an hour, max?) and I could not see why it was constantly referred to in right-wing American conspiracy circles in the 1970s and 80s as being still relevant today.

In 2011, Gosling was telling us that this book, published over 200 years before, had some bearing on our current predicament; and talking to us in a building about a quarter of a mile east of the City of London's skyscrapers.

Tony Gosling believes there are hidden networks which control the vast concrete and steel canyons of global wealth through which we had travelled to get to the event. I don't. Gosling is exercised about groups such as the Royal Institute of International Affairs in the UK and its American counterpart, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). But these bodies have websites; as does Bilderberg; as, indeed, do the British Masons.[3] Secret societies, we might simply conclude, do not.

Bill Clinton famously had a poster in his campaign office saying, "It's the economy, stupid," indicating to himself and his staff the key issue for his successful 1992 presidential election bid. These days we might say: it's the banks, stupid. A recent academic study of who owns which global companies goes quite a long way to answering the question, "Where is the power?".[4] Looking at 1,318 global companies, 40 per cent of them are controlled by what the authors call "a superentity" of only 147 companies, with interlocking board members, the biggest of which are the big global financial institutions.

Literally and formally, the power used to be in the people in those big gothic buildings on the Thames called the Houses of Parliament – but today it is in the people in those new towers of power.

Our audience wanted us to tell them who had the power in British society, when all they had to do was look west, out of the window.

Where else *could* it be?

## NOTES

[1] Ian N Richardson, Andrew P Kakabadse & Nada K Kakabadse: *Bilderberg People: elite power and consensus in world affairs*, 2010.

[2] It can be read online at http://bit.ly/qbCtiP (conspiracyarchive.com).

[3] The United Grand Lodge of England is at www.ugle.org.uk/.

[4] Stefania Vitali, James B Glattfelder & Stefano Battiston: "The network of global corporate control" at http://bit.ly/oqkVic (arxiv.org). This is summarised at http://bit.ly/rqD80b.

# CANNIBAL TALES

"Long pork" is still on the menu, as seen in court cases from China, the Punjab, Russia and across Europe.

**A man killed an 11-year-old boy and ate his brain in order to cure his own epilepsy. Wang Chaoxu, of Qixian village in Yunnan, south-west China, told police he believed an old wives' tale that eating a child's brain with earthworms and ants could cure fits. The boy, Li Xuetang, was found buried three miles (4.8km) away in a grain field. The top of his head had been peeled back and part of his brain removed. *Sun, 18 Mar 2010.***

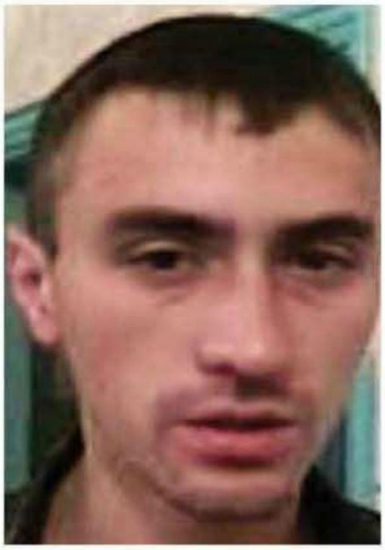
Residents of Tabubil, a Papua New Guinea mining town, awoke on 3 February to a screaming baby and found a man with a history of drug abuse eating his newborn son during a sorcery initiation ceremony. An angry mob chased the man to the police station, where he was detained after a short struggle. The discovery was too late to save the baby. *[AAP] 6 Feb 2011.*

**On 3 April, the family of 24-year-old Saira Parveen visited her grave in a Punjabi village, a day after her funeral, to find it dug up and her body missing. A police investigation led to the house of two brothers, where they found the remains of Parveen's body. Muhammad Arif, 40, and Farman Ali, 37, had cut off her legs and cooked them in a curry. *Guardian, 5 April 2011.***

A 26-year-old German identified only as Jan O was convicted in Göttingen state court on 27 June of two counts of murder, and sentenced to life in prison, for strangling Nina (14) and Tobias (13) in woodland near the town of Bodenfeld in November 2010. He confessed to licking blood from Nina's neck wound and chewing off parts of her face while she was still alive. He killed Tobias five days later. "I don't know what came over me," he told the court. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 24 June 2011.*

REX FEATURES / QUIRKY CHINA NEWS

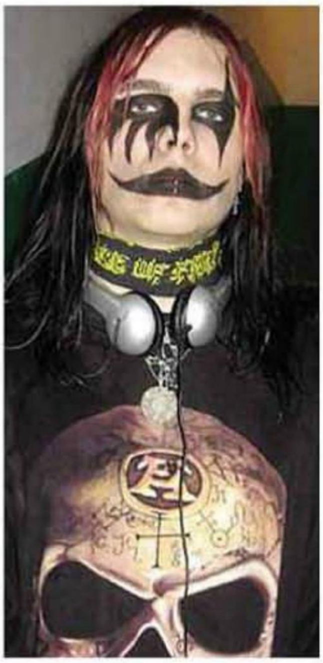
**ABOVE:** Mourning victim Li Xuetang (shown in photos). **RIGHT:** Sergei Zhmaryov ate his grandmother.



**Mfanimpela Msibi appeared in court on 8 August, accused of cannibalism. He was said to have stabbed his friend Musi Makhanya after an argument on 24 February at his home in Mankayane, a town in western Swaziland. He then removed a steak-size slice of flesh from his back, grilled and ate it. Msibi, a vegetable farmer and father of two, was arrested at his home in Swaziland when his family realised what he had done and called police. "When officers arrived he was still finishing his meal," said police spokeswoman Wendy Hleta. "It seemed that he had not cooked the flesh properly all the way through and it had proven to be chewier than he expected." *dailymail.co.uk, 9 Aug 2011.***

In July 2010, a Russian court jailed seven self-styled Satanists for up to 20 years for ritually killing and dismembering four teenagers in a forest, before cooking and eating their hearts and tongues. The atrocity took place on 29 and 30 June 2008 near the city of Yaroslavl, 150 miles (240km) northeast of Moscow. The victims, three girls and a boy aged from 15 to 17, were plied with alcohol and invited to sit round a bonfire. They were each stabbed 666 times, and their remains buried in a pit marked with an inverted cross and a dead cat. The sect was formed in 2006 and gleaned its knowledge of Satanism from the Internet, initially killing cats and dogs before graduating to homicide. Four of the (unnamed) defendants, one of them a young girl, were under 18 at the time of the murders. *telegraph.co.uk, 24 May; MX News (Sydney), 27 July 2010.*

**Sergei Gavrilov, 27, strangled his mother Lyuboy, 55, with electric cable after she refused to give him her pension money for alcohol. He put her body on the balcony of the family flat near Samara in southern Russia and then spent her money on a two-day drink and gambling binge. Returning to the flat, he soon ran out of food and started slicing meat from his mother's legs. "She was frozen, like meat in the freezer," he told police. He cooked soup and pasta with the meat for more than a month. "I did not like the meat very much," he told the court. "It was too fatty. But I was so hungry I had to eat it." The Russian criminal code dictates 15 years in jail for his crimes but the judge reduced the sentence by**



**FAR LEFT:** Victim Karina Barduchian. **CENTRE:** Florist Yury Mozhnov. **LEFT:** Goth-rocker Maxim Golovatskikh.

**nine months because Gavrilov pleaded guilty and "he was not keen to eat the meat, he was just hungry." Psychiatric tests found he was mentally "normal". He was caught when police came to his flat, suspecting him of stealing a mobile phone, and found the dead woman with both her legs missing. *MX News (Sydney), 11 Nov; D.Telegraph, 12 Nov 2009*.**

A computer programmer in Simferopol, Ukraine, ate his own grandmother, the woman who had raised him as a child after his parents separated. Sergei Zhmaryov, 26, cut the face of 60-year-old Lydia with a shard of broken mirror and then gouged out her eyeballs and ate them. A spokesman said: "All this time the old woman was conscious and tried to escape, screaming. He responded by slicing off her tongue and eating it." The man's father broke into the flat soon afterwards and found his mother lying dead in a pool of blood, her skull smashed. Her ears and lips had also apparently been devoured. His son, wearing only underpants, was holding a cross and chanting prayers in a "funeral service". The father fled and called police, who pumped gas into the flat to subdue the religious maniac, known as Vlad. *D.Mirror, 11 June 2010.*

**"I did not like the meat... I was so hungry I had to eat it"**

**In May 2010, the St Petersburg City Court convicted two young men of murdering and eating a 16-year-old schoolgirl. They were jailed for 19 and 18 years. Maxim Golovatskikh, a 21-year-old goth-rock musician, and his friend, 20-year-old florist Yuri Mozhnov, had held a party in Golovatskikh's apartment on 19 January 2009 to mark the Epiphany holy day in the Orthodox calendar, when celebrants traditionally dive into icy waters to wash away sins. Around midnight, they drowned Karina Barduchian as she took a bath, cut her into several pieces and baked some of her in the oven. The next day, Ekaterina Zinovyeva, 21, Golovatskikh's lodger, was served a meal of meat and potatoes, allegedly unaware of the meat's origin. The men later dumped the rest of Barduchian's remains in nearby streets and a canal. About 10 days later, her severed head was found in a plastic bag and identified by her mother. When arrested, the two men "confessed straight away", said a police spokesman. "They said they were hungry and drunk." *[AP] D.Express, 5 Feb 2009; [AP] 6 May 2010*.**

Police arrested three vagrants after body parts were found near a bus stop in the outskirts of the Russian city of Perm, 720 miles (1,160km) east of Moscow, in November 2009. They were charged with killing Alexander Burylov, 25, with knives and a hammer after a row over a woman. The body was then chopped up; some parts were cooked and eaten while 9lb (4kg) of meat was sold to a kebab stall. In June 2010, Yuri Vershkov (32) and Yuri Chupin (58) were sent down for 18 years for murder and cannibalism; Valery Shardakov (39) was sentenced for 13 years for murder, but was found not guilty of cannibalism. *[R] 16 Nov 2009; D.Mirror, Sun, 25 June 2010.*

**Following a trail of severed body parts, including limbs and a head, found floating in the Moskva River, Russian police were led to an apartment in eastern Moscow where they found Nikolai Shadrin, 35, eating a stew made from the liver of 40-year-old Ilya Yegorov, an acquaintance whom he had killed on 2 May 2011. The ex-mental patient had stored more of the stew in his fridge, and kept a hand as a memento until it started to decay. *[R] RIA Novosti, 17 May 2011*.**

A 71-year-old man from Dimitrov in the Ukraine killed and boiled a friend before inviting in his unsuspecting neighbours, who unwittingly ate human meat washed down with vodka. The unnamed cannibal claimed his 60-year-old victim attacked him first. He told police: "I took an axe, cut his head off, then jointed him. I gave the guts to the dog and the rest went in the pot." *Sun, 8 June 2011.*

**A Russian chef, identified as Ivan L, 21, confessed in August to murdering and eating a man he met through a gay website. He was arrested several days after human remains were found in the Arctic city of Murmansk. "I proposed that he get undressed and get in the bath and there I killed him," said Ivan on a police video, briefly posted on the Life-News website. "I turned him over, filled the bath with water so that the body would soften, then I cut it into bits, cross, and fried in the pan. I added tomato puree, oil, fried and ate it all." The local police chief said: "The only motive for the murder was his desire to taste human flesh." *Independent, 1 Sept 2011*.**

Following a hearing in Chowchilla, California, Omaima Nelson has been denied parole. Egyptian-born Nelson had killed, dismembered and cooked her husband William, 56, in 1991. She was 23 at the time. In the earlier court trial, a psychiatrist testified that Nelson said she donned a red hat, matching shoes and red lipstick before barbecuing her husband's ribs, which she described as "sweet". She also boiled his head. *Los Angeles Times, 6 Oct 2011.*

worldmags.net

# NECROLOG

We note the passing of a man who wanted dead bodies frozen, a Cottingley fairy sceptic, an artist hooked on numbers, and the DA who doubted Marilyn's suicide.

PANTALASKAS

## ROBERT ETTINGER

Ettinger is widely regarded as the founding father of the cryogenics movement. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants, he grew up a determined atheist. His faith in medicine was founded on the new bone graft surgery that saved his legs after he was badly wounded by German mortar fire in 1944. After World War II, he taught physics and maths at Wayne State University before moving to Highland Park Community College, Michigan. As a boy he was inspired by *The Jameson Satellite* (1931), a science fiction short story by Neil R Jones, about a professor who has his corpse placed into orbit in the belief that the cold of outer space would preserve him. Millions of years passed and the human race died out. Then a race of advanced aliens came along with mechanical bodies; they took the professor's frozen brain and put it in a mechanical body. Ettinger thought Jones had missed the point of his own story; "Why wait for the aliens?" he asked. "Why not do it ourselves?"

Inspired by a French scientist who found that frog sperm was viable after being frozen, in 1962 Ettinger self-published the founding document of cryonics, *The Prospect of Immortality*. This described the practical and moral aspects of deep-freezing the dead and revealed him as an eternal optimist about mankind's technological future. He foresaw intergalactic settlement, and argued that science would produce medical machines that would cure all diseases. What now seemed to be a fatal illness would be no more than a twinge by 2050. From this it followed that the dead might be "cured" by the doctors of the future. He described a world in which people would become nobler and more responsible as they confronted the reality of living forever.

The book was published formally by Doubleday in 1964; it was translated into nine languages and ran through four editions. It struck an "instantaneous public nerve", according to *Life* magazine, and made Ettinger a celebrity. "We have to wait for the technology of revival," he said, "but we have to see to the arrangements of freezing ourselves, because most of us are going to die long before the technology of revival is there." Orthodox scientists, however, muttered that resurrecting a frozen body would be like "trying to turn a hamburger back into a cow".

In January 1967, Dr James Bedford, a retired psychology professor, became the first person to be placed in cryonic suspension; his body was drained of blood, permeated with cryoprotectant (a sort of human antifreeze) and placed in a vat of liquid nitrogen at –196°C (–321°F). By the mid-1990s, there were about 65 people in suspension and half a dozen organisations dedicated to the philosophy of the deep-freeze, catering to a growing band of immortalists. Perhaps 1,000 people have taken out insurance policies to cover the cost of storage, which ranges between $28,000 and $150,000. "Many are cold, but few are frozen," as Ettinger once said. (Their number does not include Walt Disney – that's an urban legend.)

Ettinger took particular encouragement from advances in nanotechnology, which he thought would provide the machinery to successfully repair frozen corpses. He has now become the 106th patient to be stored in the Cryonics Institute he founded in Michigan in 1976, along with his mother, Rhea (since 1977), and his two wives, Elaine (1987) and Mae (2000). (He once acknowledged that it would be a "high-class problem" if both his wives and himself were revived.) The Institute has also preserved more than 64 animals, mostly dogs and cats, but also a few birds and a hamster. Whether anyone is revived might not ultimately be down to technology, but to the whims of our distant descendants. What would be the point of thawing out a load of clapped-out geriatrics in an already crowded world?

*Robert Chester Wilson Ettinger, immortalist, born Atlantic City, New Jersey 4 Dec 1918; died of respiratory failure in Clinton Township, Detroit, Michigan 23 July 2011, aged 92.*

## JOE COOPER

Joe Cooper, a lecturer in sociology at Bradford University, was the jovial debunker of the celebrated Cottingley fairy photographs (supposedly showing fairies in a Yorkshire garden in 1917), though he was far from sceptical about the existence of the "Little People". His sympathetic approach ended the long deception by Frances Griffith and her cousin Elsie Wright, who were in their 80s when Cooper's report appeared in the partwork *The Unexplained* in 1983. He first met the cousins in the 1970s and had got to know them well. They described to him how the "fairies" had been copied by Wright from *Princess Mary's Gift Book* (1914), and then held in place with hatpins. They said their little joke had got wildly out of hand because of people who "believed because they wanted to believe" – including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (see **FT43:48–53**). However, they continued to maintain that they had actually encountered real fairies.

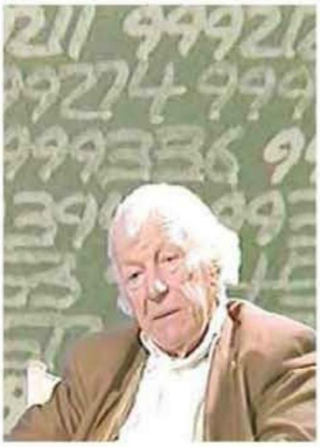
*Henry Joseph Cooper, sociologist, born Leeds 3 Feb 1924; died 16 Aug 2011, aged 87.*

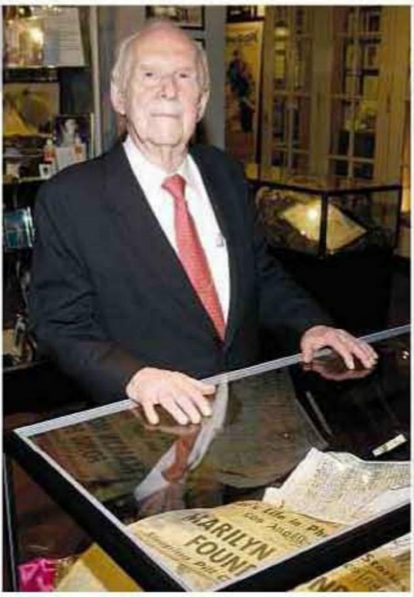
## ROMAN OPALKA

Roman Opalka (right) was born in France, the son of Polish immigrants. In 1965, he began what he described as "a philosophical and spiritual image of the progression of time and of life and death" when he took up a fine brush and painted a tiny white number "1" in acrylic paint on the upper-left corner of a black canvas. He continued painting rows of tiny numbers from one side of the canvas to the other. When he reached the lower right-hand corner, he was up to 35,327. Then he took up another canvas and began again, from the number 35,328, and so on. Typically, he would paint about 400 figures a day. In the early 1970s, after completing each canvas, he began adding tiny amounts of white paint to the background colour and recording his voice reading the sequence of numbers. He also began taking black-and-white photographs of his own face – always with the same deadpan expression, always wearing the same shirt.

He called his paintings (of which there are 233) Opalka 1965/1–∞ and aimed to carry on until the day he died. He is thought to have stopped short of 6,000,000, but it is difficult to tell, as by the end of his Sisyphean journey he was painting white numerals on a white background – a colour he called *blanc merité* (well-earned white). Some critics saw the project as a sort of suicide in slow motion, an impression Opalka never tried to dispel. "Time as we live it and as we create it embodies our progressive disappearance", he explained in 1987. "We are at the same time alive and in the face of death – that is the mystery of all living beings."

In 2010, Christies in New York





GETTY IMAGES / AMANDA EDWARDS

sold a group of three of his number paintings for $1.3 million – a sum that prices the entire work at more than $100 million, or more than $16 per number.

*Roman Opalka, conceptual artist, born Hocquincourt, northern France 27 Aug 1931; died 6 Aug 2011.*

### JOHN MINER

John Miner (above), head of the Los Angeles district attorney's medical-legal section, investigated the mysterious death of Marilyn Monroe in 1962, and concluded she had been murdered. A post mortem conducted by Dr Thomas Noguchi suggested the 36-year-old actress had died of acute barbiturate poisoning and her death was ruled a "probable suicide". Miner was present at the post mortem. There were two factors that raised doubts in his mind about the suicide verdict. The first was that toxicity levels in Monroe's body were extremely high, suggesting she would have had to take 60 to 70 pills. Despite this, the autopsy recorded that: "The stomach is almost completely empty. No residue of the pills is noted." The second suspicious factor was that specimens that could have settled the matter one way or another "disappeared overnight, including the liver, kidney and stomach and its contents, which would have proven definitely she did not kill herself." Miner concluded that she had been given an enema of the barbiturate Nembutal. A memo to this effect that he wrote to the coroner, Theodore Curphey, and copied to the chief deputy district attorney, Manley Bowler, also disappeared.

*John Willis Miner, prosecutor, born Cleveland Heights, Ohio 20 Dec 1918; died 25 Feb 2011, aged 92.*

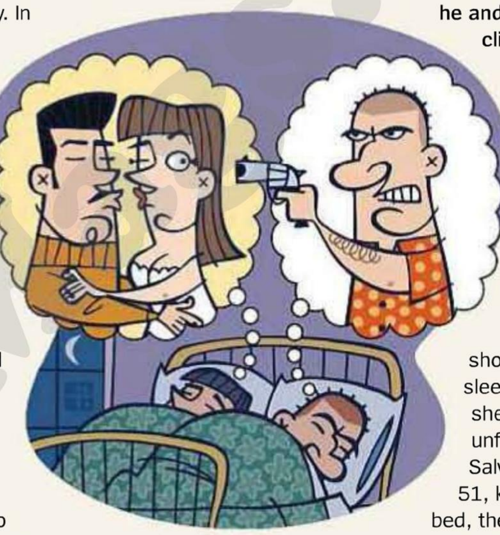
FOR MORE STRANGE DEATHS GO TO:
www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/strangedeaths

# Strange deaths

## UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

ABDUL HAMID AL-FAKKI, A SUDANESE MAN, was convicted in Saudi Arabia of practising "witchcraft and sorcery" and sentenced to death. Scores of people are arrested every year in the kingdom on charges of practising sorcery, witchcraft, black magic and fortune-telling, which are considered to be polytheism by the ultraconservative judiciary. In October 2010, Amnesty International appealed to King Abdullah to commute al-Fakki's sentence, but on 19 September this year he was beheaded by sword in the western city of Medina. The same fate befell an Egyptian working as a pharmacist in Saudi Arabia, executed in 2007 for using sorcery to separate a married couple.

Ali Hussain Sibat, 49, a devout Shiite Muslim and father of five, used to host a call-in talk show on Sheherazade, a satellite television channel from his home in Beirut, Lebanon, making predictions and giving advice. He was said to be the most popular psychic on the channel, especially among callers from the conservative Gulf states. His wife said he became interested in astrology from the age of 15, and read many books on the subject. In May 2008, he went on pilgrimage to Mecca, and then on to Medina to pray at the Mosque of the Prophet. Here, according to his own account, he was woken from an afternoon nap in his hotel by a telephone call from a Saudi man, asking if he could make a magic talisman for his sister, who had marital problems. Sibat said he would be happy to help. As soon as he hung up, the Mutawa'een (religious police) stormed into his room and arrested him for witchcraft. He was sentenced to death by decapitation in November 2009 and was due for the chop on 9 April 2010, but a week earlier his lawyer May al-Khansa said he would not be executed. It was not clear whether this was a reprieve or merely a postponement. *[CNN] 20 Mar, 1+2 April; BBC News, 1 April; Guardian, 3 April; [AP] 22 April; Psychic News, 24 April; [AFP] 21 Sept 2010.*



TERRY COLON

**TO MARK HIS 70th BIRTHDAY AND FULFIL A lifetime dream, Alistair Cook climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak, on 11 September. The passionate hiker texted his wife Vicky: "Reached the summit at 09.50am, feel exhausted but happy." Two hours later, he died from a heart attack after he and his four fellow climbers started their descent from the 19,340ft (5,895m) peak. His body was flown home to Newtown Linford in Leicestershire. *D.Mail, 30 Sept 2011*.**

A HUSBAND SAID HE shot his wife in his sleep while dreaming she had an affair. The unfortunately named Salvatore Scandale, 51, killed Mariella, 46, in bed, then called police. "I woke up with the sound of the gun," he told them. Police in Turin, Italy, said they "don't believe a word" of the claim. *Metro, 9 Aug 2011.*

**OTTO VON HAPSBURG, SON OF THE LAST Austro-Hungarian emperor and scion of the oldest noble family in Europe, died on 4 July aged 98 at his home in Bavaria. On 16 July, he was laid to rest in the crypt of the Capuchin church in Vienna, Austria, along with remains of all the holders of the throne he never inherited.**

**In keeping with strict royal and imperial Catholic tradition, his heart was buried separately on 17 July at the Pannonhalma Benedictine monastery near Budapest in Hungary. *Sunday Times, 17 July 2011*.**

A FRENCH PRISON INMATE HANGED HIMSELF with the "paper" pyjamas in his government-issue anti-suicide kit. The unnamed 23-year-old managed to "twist and weave" the pyjamas at La Santé Prison in Paris to make a rope strong enough to hold his weight. He was the second inmate in six months to have killed himself using the kit. *Metro, 21 Sept 2011.*

# the **UFO** files

**FORTEAN TIMES** presents our monthly section featuring regular sighting reports, reviews of classic cases, entries on major ufological topics and hands-on advice for UFO investigators. **The UFO Files** will benefit from your input, so don't hesitate to submit your suggestions and questions.

To contact **The UFO Files**, write to: **nufon@btinternet.com** or **UFO Files, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD**.

## FLYINGSAUCERY

**ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE** PRESENT THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

### IT'S GREAT WHEN YOU'RE STRAIGHT – YEAH!

Shaun Ryder (right), former vocalist with Happy Mondays and Black Grape, is using his experience of being 'out there' to search for aliens. In what some might consider a bizarre move, the History Channel has given Ryder an eight-part TV show, *Shaun Ryder on UFOs*. Rather than trek to the usual areas for UFOs, such as Area 51 and Roswell, Ryder is starting local, in his home of Manchester, a city he believes has a "shortcut through space and time" and where he saw a UFO at the age of 15. A media insider claimed: "He'll try to separate fact from fiction and meet odd characters, some of whom make him look sane. It will be revelatory but funny." Quite whether the show will be an addition to the body of serious ufological literature or utter nonsense remains to be seen. But bear in mind Ryder's own personal experience of saucers, of which he says: "I've seen fookin' hundreds and hundreds of spacecraft flying across the sky over Salford. I mean hundreds of them. Hundreds!" http://bit.ly/rvkhBC (nme.com); See also Andy Roberts: "Rocking The Alien", **FT188:34–38**.

GETTY IMAGES / DAVID HOGAN

### LIVERPOOL UNPREPARED FOR ALIEN INVASION

Since the Freedom of Information Act arrived, government bodies have received dozens of eccentric requests from persistent correspondents. One popular subject for requests to various government bodies is "What plans do you have to deal with an alien invasion?". In August, a version of this question was logged by Merseyside Police, the Fire Service and the city's Primary Care Trust. A curious citizen wanted "any or all information held by yourselves relating to plans to deal with an alien invasion… by alien, I mean a life-form that evolved on a planet other than Earth and travelled here by any means possible." The city's fire service dismissed the request as "vexatious" with no "serious purpose or value". But the police admitted they had "no specific plan". Such a national emergency, it appears, would be dealt with by the MoD and Home Office. In turn, they – in response to other FOI requests – claim they have no specific plan either. So while some might say requests such as these are a waste of time and public money, we have at least learned something from this bureaucratic buck-passing. Even if such a plan really existed, as Mike Marshall of Liverpool Skeptics noted with tongue-in-cheek: "I would question their ability to do anything about an alien invasion… what are they going to do, squirt water at them?" *Liverpool Echo*, *29 Aug 2011*.

### McKINNON'S MUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

The mother of Gary McKinnon, the computer hacker who roamed at will through the most secure American military computer networks, has been shortlisted for a human rights award. Janis Sharp (below) was nominated for the award by the human rights group Liberty in acknowledgement of her struggle to prevent her son being extradited to America. McKinnon, who is currently on bail but facing 'fast track' extradition to the US, appears to be public enemy number one in the eyes of some within the American establishment. Recently, Louis Susman, the United States ambassador to the United Kingdom, described McKinnon as "someone [who] took down our whole defense system in a computer hacking incident. That made us very vulnerable." And earlier this year the US attorney general Eric Holder reiterated the country's desire to punish the hacker, saying: "We will continue to take all necessary steps to have him [McKinnon] extradited to the United States and held accountable for the crimes he has committed." But as the *Guardian*'s Duncan Campbell noted, "The fact that Susman is seriously suggesting that the US was made 'very vulnerable' by a bloke with a computer in a north London bedroom hacking into the NASA and US Defense Department computers just shows to what depths this argument has degenerated. Can a 'whole defence system' really be taken down by someone looking for evidence of UFOs and leaving a few disparaging remarks about poor computer security?" Nevertheless, the threat to McKinnon is very real and as his mother says, the award shortlisting will "help me highlight Gary's case and it will help me highlight the extradition treaty, which means that anyone can be sent away without evidence." http://bit.ly/sBjrYn (whtimes.co.uk); http://bit.ly/tp497V (guardian.co.uk).

Fair U.K. Trial for Gary Mckinnon
I WANT … FOR U.S.A … PRIDE
BRITISH JUSTICE SOLD TO AMERICA

GETTY IMAGES / AFP / BEN STANSALL

### BY JOVE – FOOLED AGAIN!

In August, an RAF helicopter searched Loch Ness after reports of a mysterious object falling from the sky (**FT281:30**). The source of this particular false alarm was never identified, but as these things often occur in clusters we waited for the reports of the next phantom air crash. Sure enough, on 3 October lifeboats and a rescue helicopter from RAF Boulmer were scrambled after a report of a "a distress flare" seen from the northeast coast at Tynemouth. But after an extensive air-sea search drew a blank, Adrian Don, of Tynemouth RNLI revealed: "…as [we] spoke further to the member of the public, it became apparent that the flares were in fact the planet Jupiter." At the time, the planet was bright and prominent in the night sky. It rose from the east at dusk to stand high on the meridian before midnight by November – a prime candidate for misperception as a UFO or, in this case, a distress flare. Mr Don said the planet "was also partly covered by clouds which possibly gave it the appearance of a flare". On other occasions, stars, bright planets and even the rising Moon have given rise to UFO reports from all kinds of reliable witnesses – including police officers. *BBC News Tyne & Wear*, 4 Oct 2011.

# UFO CASEBOOK

## I READ THE NEWS TODAY, OH BOY...

John Lennon wrote of “4,000 holes in Blackburn, Lancashire”, but, says **JENNY RANDLES**, a newly released MoD file provides an image of UFOs swarming around that same town.

At 2am on 24 February 1979, the most dramatic UFO case in Lancashire occurred (see **FT193:25**). It involved a glowing object that ‘landed’ in a Rossendale Valley quarry. Police officers and others across the county saw odd things over the next 45 minutes. An orange ball of fire (possibly a USAF F-111 jet flying low towards the path of the UFO) buzzed a caravan park near Southport. The initial landing occurred in the small village of Stacksteads, where I was born, and was, most unusually, reported to me ‘live’ by the witness as it unfolded.

The newly released MOD file (DEFE 24 2091) contains a report relevant to this case. Submitted days later to Air Staff, the report is from the ROF (Royal Ordnance Factory) in Lower Darwen, Blackburn – just west of Rossendale. It describes an incident seen by a police sergeant on duty that day.

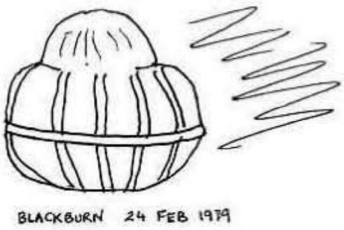
There were three witnesses, described as “sober, steady and reliable policemen”. The director of the weapons establishment confirms that the sergeant had “seen the same thing on nights before but up towards Guide” (a village just to the north-east). But only this incident was filed, because the UFO then flew right over the base at between 500 and 700ft (150–210m) altitude and so became officially ‘reportable’.

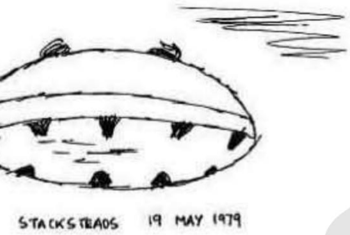
The sergeant explains that the object was first seen at 2.37am from his office and west of the factory but heading north to south and “illuminating the whole area with a ‘soft’ or ‘dull’ (not brilliant) yellow coloured light”. He brought it to the attention of a constable and went into his office to get some binoculars. When he returned, it had vanished, but a second constable had also come to look for the UFO.

About a minute later, the glow returned over Darwen and, as all three witnessed, now illuminated several streets in the grammar school area. The UFO was about 30ft (9m) across and made up of a saucer-shaped base with an upturned saucer on top. Above the object was a light-bulb-shaped ‘dome’. The light came from inside the UFO, revealing a dark ring within and dark curved ‘ribs’ running from top to bottom. Smoke or vapour was seen trailing in its wake.

The sergeant’s sketch reveals an impressive saucer-like object. He adds that he followed procedure and immediately phoned the civilian police in Blackburn to report this intrusion above a factory which made military fuses and components. The Lancashire constabulary merely “laughed like Smash spacemen” (characters in a then famous TV ad).

As these events occurred, the Stacksteads witness, Mike Sacks, had climbed the dark moors after calling me, hoping to find the landed UFO. At around 2.40am, shortly after the ROF sighting, he met two police officers from a patrol car on the valley road who had seen the object as it passed south from Blackburn. They – like Mike – were now on the hills looking for the UFO.





The witnesses were “sober, steady, reliable policemen”

These PCs spoke to the MoD – yet, curiously, their report is not in the released file. Neither is one filed by Mike Sacks. Consequently, even when this ‘new’ MoD file briefly made the news in Blackburn this summer, it was reported as an isolated incident and did not provoke the attention it deserves, given how it fits the sequence of events that night.

Those of a conspiratorial mindset might suspect a deliberate separation of the evidence to downgrade a case when the files were released. But it was probably just because there was little UFO interest within the MoD or much coordination between scattered records.

Now I want to trace the ROF witnesses (we have details, as the MoD redaction was oddly lax). So if any readers have information about the Blackburn plant – such as relatives who might have worked there before closure or contact with any staff who might recall the night – please write to us at *FT*.

These new data add intriguing clues to a major case. For instance, the reference by the sergeant to prior sightings sent me looking for other case files in the Blackburn area. And I found many from the Shadsworth area (close by the ROF base) and on the moors to the south and east towards Rossendale.

One later incident stands out – at Pickup Bank, Darwen, at 1.30am on 17 July 1982, a beautiful summer night. The witness, a CB radio enthusiast, drove up onto the moors above Blackburn because some unusual ionisation in the atmosphere made for great reception. Suddenly, with a buzzing, humming noise, an explosion of light emerged from the sky. It was a rounded, rectangular mass from which three balls of bluish/orange light exploded. These sped off in different directions (one towards Stacksteads) as the stunned witness looked on.

I thought that circumstances implied some kind of charged, ionised UAP (unidentified atmospheric phenomenon). Indeed, there had been near-identical reports from this area – including one over Todmorden, where a glowing mass split into three balls in the same manner. This was less than a mile from where the famous PC Alan Godfrey ‘abduction’ had occurred on 29 November 1980 (see **FT242:33**; **269:44–47**; **270:46–49**).

And, at the same time – independently – I received a report from that same summer night in 1982. This came from a man and his girlfriend who noticed the bedroom lights flicker as a humming/buzzing noise filled the air above their house. Outside, all street lights and adjacent house lights were now dark. Overhead they saw a bright glow that suddenly split into three separate blobs that shot across the sky in different directions. As the blobs sped away, the house and street lights came back on.

This wasn’t near Blackburn but outside Ipswich – close to Rendlesham Forest, where 18 months earlier the famed USAF base encounter had occurred. Intriguingly, that location is also noted for regular UAP events and one of the sons of the base officers had even described to me during the 1980 incident seeing the very same effect of three balls of light splitting apart and whooshing across the sky.

Does all this suggest that we dealing with some rare, but recurring, UAP triggered by levels of atmospheric ionisation? Perhaps so – especially given the similarity between the sketch by the ROF sergeant released with the new MoD file and one made by Mike Sacks. He never gave up his quest to prove what he saw ‘land’ in 1979, and visited the moors late at night for months hoping to see the same thing again – being rewarded on 19 May by a close-up view as a buzzing object fell out of the sky right over his head.

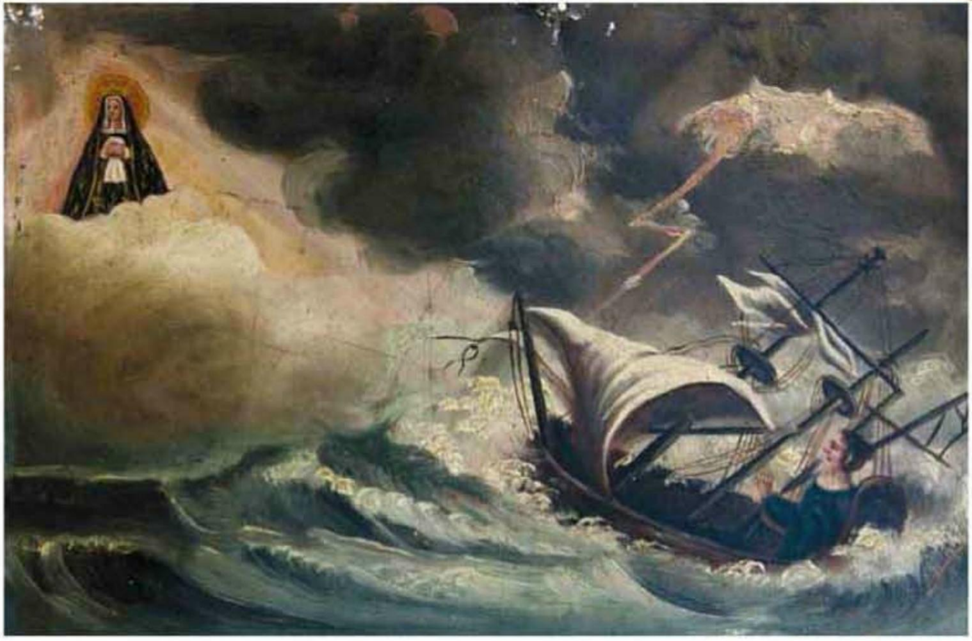
However, one more curiosity links the events in this story. All the key sightings mentioned here took place between 1 and 3am on a Saturday morning. This anomaly was spotted long ago, so we looked for, and discovered, a possible recurring cause: a cargo plane from Scotland to Manchester passing over the Rossendale area every Saturday around 2.30am. We found evidence that this DC-9 was turning off its lighting, throttling back its engines and dropping like a stone to ‘glide’ across the moors.

We tried to prove that this jet caused all of these sightings. In a few cases we were successful, but we failed for the night of 24 February 1979. And, of course, it cannot have caused the events in Suffolk. We may never know if a rogue plane was the cause, but this new report adds fuel to the question. As does Mike Sacks’s recollection that on the morning after the event, at 2am, two military jets flew low along the Rossendale valley heading towards Blackburn.

# FBI FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

## 115. Miracles and charms

**DAVID V BARRETT** reports on two exhibitions at London's Wellcome Trust, of votive offerings and amulets.



MUSEO NACIONAL DE LAS INTERVENCIONES / INAH

There's a fine line between folk faith and superstition – or, as anthropologists a century ago tried to distinguish, between religion and magic. Just across the road from London's Euston Station, two exhibitions at the Wellcome Collection, *Miracles* and *Charms*, explore physical expressions of folk faith.

Votive offerings go back millennia, through ancient Greece into prehistory, and come in many forms – coins, deliberately broken weapons, candles, inscribed tablets. But the votive paintings of Mexico, known as *retablos*, are something special.

It's human nature to say in a moment of crisis, "Oh God, if you get me out of this I promise I'll…" – and then to forget. But certain towns in Mexico have a centuries-old custom of offering a unique form of "thank you" to God or a saint for deliverance from illness or accident, from a train crash or (this being Mexico) bandits. People commission a local folk artist to do a small painting of the traumatic incident, with handwritten text describing it and which saint they asked for help, and then they put it up in their local church.

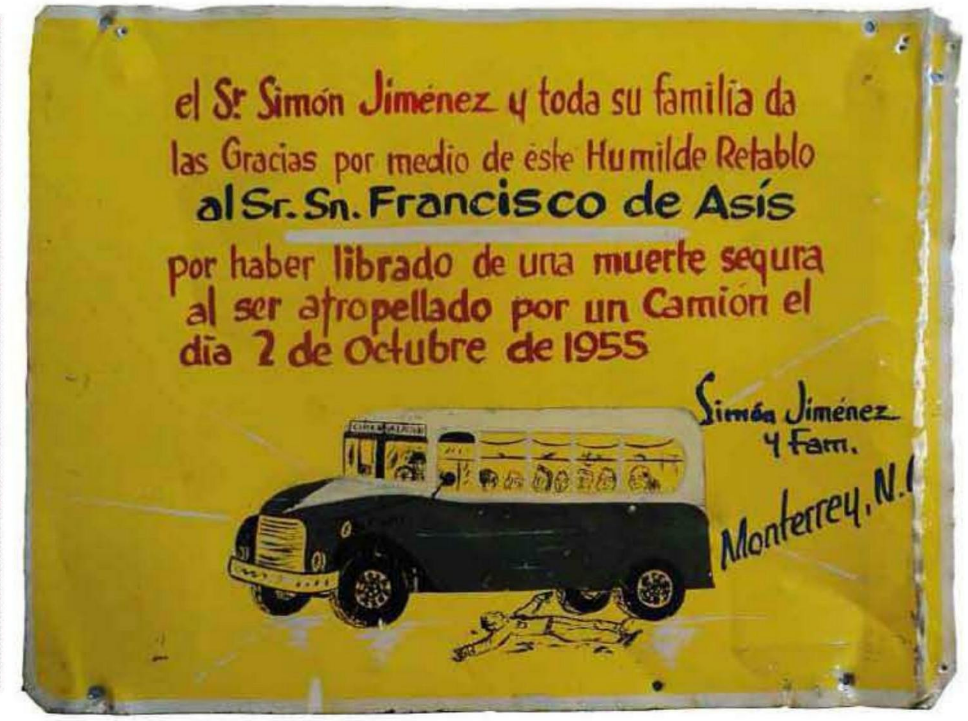
When you enter *Infinitas Gracias: Mexican Miracle Paintings*, you're met with two walls filled floor to ceiling with votive paintings, just as they are displayed in Mexican churches. These are reproductions, but the exhibition has over 100 original paintings on loan from museums and from two churches in silver-mining communities in the north of the country – the city of Guanajuato and the mountain town of Real de Catorce. The paintings have never left Mexico before; the Wellcome Trust funded some local health education projects in exchange.

COURTESY PITT RIVERS MUSEUM

A few are on canvas or wood, but most are painted on small tin roof tiles. Some are exquisite; others are more crude, yet somehow the more touching for it. Many offer straightforward thanks for being saved from accident or illness: "Sr Simón Jiménez and all his family give thanks to Saint Francis of Assisi with this humble *retablo* for saving him from a certain death after being run over by a bus on 2 October 1955."

One, very crudely drawn on a piece of wood, clearly by the person himself, just shows a pair of feet and says simply: "Thank you for curing my feet".

Another shows a tense domestic scene: "In the month of May 1885 Visenta Garcia went crazy and her husband Francisco Mejia, being in such a state of agitation, entrusted himself to María Santisíma de la Soledad de Sta Cruz de Mejico and she was instantly



el Sr Simón Jiménez y toda su familia da las Gracias por medio de este Humilde Retablo al Sr. Sn. Francisco de Asís por haber librado de una muerte segura al ser atropellado por un Camion el día 2 de Octubre de 1955

Simón Jiménez y Fam.

Monterrey, N.

PROPIEDAD DEL SANTUARIO DE SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS DE LA DIÓCESIS DE MATEHUALA, SLP, MÉXICO / INAH cured. In gratitude he dedicates this *retablo*."

There are constant reminders that life in Mexico could be fraught with danger. A painting of a man being hanged from the branch of a tree has this text: "In the R. de Pastores in 1917, Roman Camargo twice found himself in great danger of dying, first hanged and then executed. After they had released him from the hook and he landed almost dead, he knelt for the firing squad to shoot him. His mother invoked the miraculous Saint Nicholas and he was immediately released."

Many of the situations are more ordinary, but crucial to the people involved. One painting gives thanks after a peasant finds his lost goats; another says: "I thank God and Saint Francis of Assisi for saving our 4 horses and 2 donkeys from equine encephalitis."

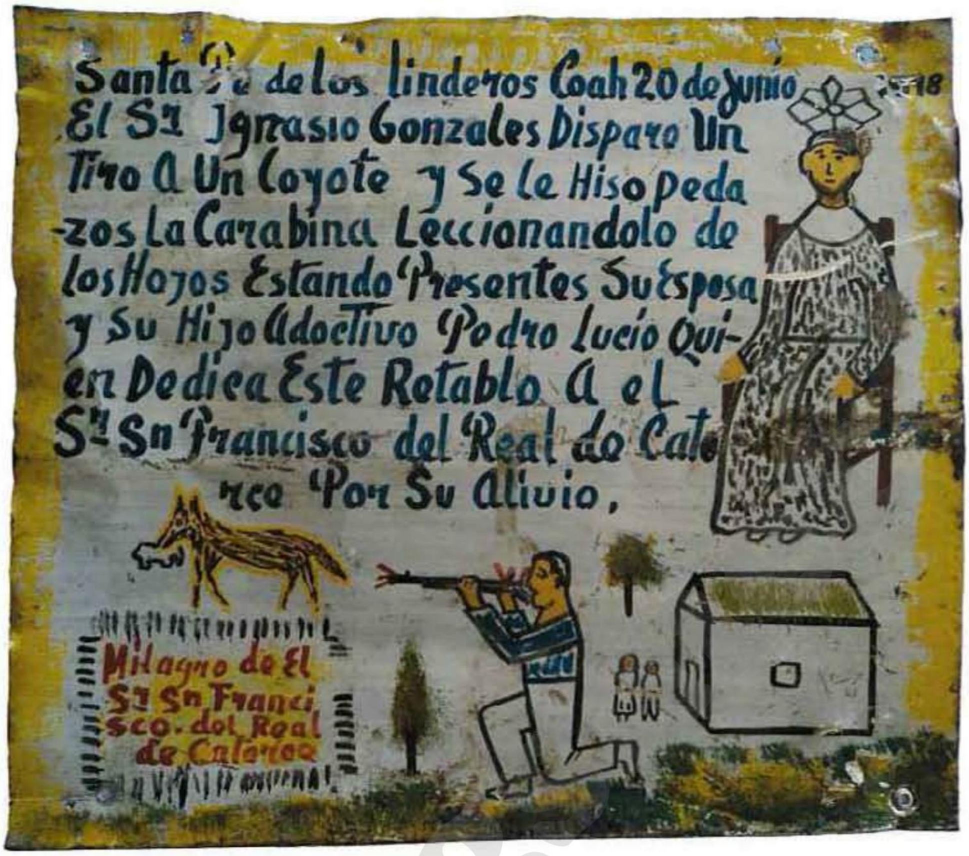
Others tell complex and very human stories: "At Irapuato on 28 July 1884, I, Juana Elizalde, promised this *retablo* to Saint Francis of Paola, who is venerated in the Compañía de Guanajuato, on the condition that my daughter Fernanda Santana recovered after the birth. But I feared the husband, thinking the son wasn't his, would severely punish mother and child. But seeing the baby, he changed his mind and the child lives on in a legitimate marriage. For the lasting memory of this very unusual event, I give this dedication on the 15th day of October 1884."

According to James Peto, one of the curators of the exhibition, "The custom of votive paintings came over from Spain with the conquistadores, and became particularly strong in Mexico, possibly because there was already in the indigenous religions a strong tradition of making sacrifices and of giving thanks, so it seemed to resonate. The Catholic Church was very good at marrying the faith that it was introducing on top of the faith that was already there."

The paintings on display range from the 1740s to the 1970s, when the practice of commissioning paintings to give thanks to the saints was replaced by people bringing their own photographs, documents and objects – including wedding dresses and babies' clothing – and pinning them up on a wall in the church to give thanks.

It's possible to spend hours with these colourful paintings, which dramatically tell of the calamities of everyday life and the depth of faith and devotion of the ordinary people of Mexico over more than two centuries.

In contrast, the second exhibition is smaller, quieter, more intimate. Subtitled "The Solace of Objects", *Charmed Life* is a display of some 400 small amulets collected by the folklorist Edward Lovett in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Lovett (1852–1933) was chief cashier at a major London bank but spent much of his spare time wandering the streets and docks of east London collecting charms and amulets from dockers, hawkers and costermongers. He curated an exhibition, *The Folklore of London*, at the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum in 1916, and published the book *Magic in Modern London* in 1925.


Santa Fe de los linderos Coah 20 de Junio
El Sr Ignasio Gonzales Disparo Un
Tiro A Un Coyote y Se le Hiso peda
-zos La Carabina Leccionandolo de
los Hojos Estando Presentes Su Esposa
y Su Hijo Adoctivo Podro Lucio Qui-
en Dedica Este Retablo A el
Sr Sn Francisco del Real de Cato
rce Por Su Alivio.
Milagro de El
Sr Sn Franci
sco. del Real
de Catorce

PROPIEDAD DEL SANTUARIO DE SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS DE LA DIÓCESIS DE MATEHUALA, SLP, MÉXICO / INAH

**FACING PAGE:** A pair of *retablos*, both painted on tin, giving thanks for those saved from travel-related perils; the earlier example, from 1830, records a storm at sea, and the later one, from 1955, a near-fatal encounter with a bus.

**ABOVE**: On 20 June 1948, Señor Ignasio Gonzalez was shooting a coyote when his rifle splintered, hurting his eyes. His wife and adoptive son dedicated this *retablo* to Saint Francis of Real de Catorce, in thanks for his recovery.

COURTESY PITT RIVERS MUSEUM

## They are a unique way of saying "thank you" to God

Some believe the word "amulet" comes from the Arabic for "to carry": these are objects that people carried with them, for luck or protection. In the exhibition, horseshoes, sharks' teeth, glass sea horses, tiny boots and shoes, sprigs of coral, small holed stones, crosses and phalluses amongst much else are displayed in a themed flow, like eddies in a river.

There are wood, bone and glass acorns to ward against lightning. "You see them on light-pulls and blinds. But this comes from a much richer tradition. The god of thunder lived in an oak tree, therefore an acorn would protect you against lightning; they were hung up in windows because it was felt that lightning would come in through the window," says artist and curator Felicity Powell.

There's an animal vertebra carved with a face, angel wings to protect the house, a lobster claw with a tiny inlaid silver Virgin Mary and the tip of a rabbit's tongue to protect against poverty.

Each one has its own story – its personal history now unknown – of the working class men and women who carried them for luck a century ago.

Ms Powell has incorporated ideas from some of the amulets into her own artwork: intricate relief miniatures in white and red wax on the black backs of mirrors. From the neck of a silhouette grows a pattern of roots. From the fingertips of a tiny hand flow flames, or a bush, or coral – the ambiguity is exquisite.

Coral is important to her. "I think it's the colour that makes it special because it connects with the life force, blood. There's a lot of metamorphosis in the work that I do, and also in the way that I've arranged these. The coral turns into hands, and the hands are in gestures that ward off the evil eye, the jealous glance."

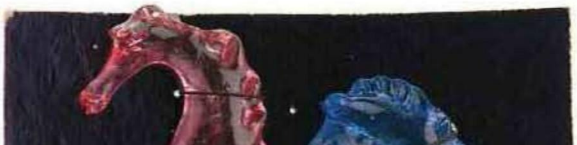
One of two videos uses an overhead camera to show Powell making these miniatures, drawing out the wax with her fingertips to create slender hands the size of her own fingernails, then using dental tools for the fine detail. The miniatures are animated – one has tiny fish streaming from the mouth of a silhouette – and transformative: a tousle-haired head is turned to lie in a bowl of water and, exhaling a single breath, becomes an island in the sea

below wispy clouds.

The other video is made up from MRI and PET-CT scans of the artist's own body. Over the faint image of her spine and internal organs, the Lord's Prayer slowly appears in a spiral.

This was originally written on a disc of paper the size of a gold sovereign by 88-year-old George Yeofound of Southampton in 1872, and was carried by a soldier of the Middlesex Regiment during World War I. It's tiny; you can only read it with a magnifying glass. Powell blew it up then traced it, word by word. "It was almost as if George Yeofound had reached across a century and a half to teach me. It's overlaid on an image from a PET scan, the body rotating in space; it encircles the heart. Whenever people have said they would pray for me, I've always felt incredibly touched and very grateful – but it was actually the act of tracing and retracing and going over this prayer which made me really understand the poetry and the contemplative power of it. So for me this amulet has become incredibly significant. I don't think I've had a religious conversion, but I've understood somehow or been given access to something about the quality of prayer."

As the video continues, with cross sections of Powell's body from the crown of her head downwards, the slightly disturbing, intrusive nature of the scan is dispelled by the overlaying of some of the amulets from the exhibition: two sea horses, a horseshoe and a shoe. "For me, looking at these scans, they're very personal, but also strangely objectifying and comforting. The sea horses float in and out, covering me – one of the elements of this exhibition is a sense of protection through concealment."



"I am sending you a couple of Sea-horses from Venice. These were made specially for me as they are no longer made in the ordinary way, being formerly regarded as charms." Edward Lovett.
25.8.08

Sea horses were always seen as very powerful amulets; they have a magical quality. "Lovett, when he travelled to Venice, made this connection between sea horses and gondola prows, which he felt were modelled on sea horses. But also mothers in Venice would have dried sea horses when they were breastfeeding because they thought it helped lactation. So the MRI, which is a breast MRI, has a couple of sea horses floating inside!"

With soft, haunting background music by her friend, experimental American composer William Basinski, these videos are captivating, hypnotic, an audio-visual hymn to wellbeing. "He has an extraordinary ability to make music that is quite transcendent. It's contemplative. I think that's one of the qualities of these objects and why I'm interested in them: because they're small, because they're very intense, because there's quite a lot of mystery around them, they deserve some scrutiny and time. These two films are made in response to Lovett's collection."

Amulets are for life, for hope, for health, but they are also flexible, she says. "This gives me licence to be creative with it, to make connections between things, to see the commonalities, the common threads."

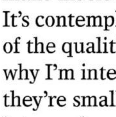
As with the Mexican miracle paintings, it's their very ordinariness that speaks of the trust and faith of real, ordinary people. **FT**

**TOP:** Artist Felicity Powell with some of the 400 items she selected for the Charmed Lives exhibition.

**ABOVE:** Beautifully carved seahorse amulets from the Lovett collection.

© FELICITY POWELL, 2011

Miracles and Charms is two free exhibitions, *Infinitas Gracias: Mexican Miracle Paintings* and *Charmed Life: The Solace of Objects*, at the Wellcome Collection, 183 Euston Road, London, until 26 Feb 2012.



**DAVID V BARRETT** is a regular *FT* contributor. He writes, and speaks frequently on TV and radio, on alternative religions and secret societies. His books include *The New Believers* and *A Brief History of Secret Societies.*

FREEFONE
0500 000 880

# SPIRAL

FREE
CATALOGUE

WWW.SPIRALDIRECT.COM

## NEW WINTER CATALOGUE OUT NOW!

SPEND OVER £20 AND GET A FREE T-SHIRT

| Ref NAME | CODE | SIZES | DESCRIPTION | PRICE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A = ANGEL OF DEATH | DT209800 | XXL XL L M S | HOODED SS | £27.99 |
| B = DRAGON ROSE | TR326237 | 2XL XL L M S | LATIN BOATNECK | £17.99 |
| C = ENSLAVED ANGEL | DT195966 | WINE | PAIR OF GLASSES | £12.99 |
| D = CATS EYES | DT194282 | 2XL XL L M S | SHLDR LACE | £17.99 |
| E = AIR GUITAR | TR327700 | XXL XL L M | LONGSLEEVE | £13.99 |
| F = VAMPIRE'S KISS | DT205284 | 2XL XL L M S | FALLING STRAP | £19.99 |
| G = WHITE WOLF | TR324819 | XXL XL L M S | WHT/BLK HOOD | £27.99 |
| H = WITCH CAT | DT172970 | ONE SIZE | CERAMIC MUG | £5.99 |
| I = VAMP FANGS | DT185283 | 2XL XL L M S | LS LACE GLOVE | £19.99 |
| J = CAST OUT | WM116700 | XXL XL L M | LONGSLEEVE | £13.99 |

COMPLETE THE ORDER FORM BELOW, DETACH & POST TO US WITH YOUR CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER TO: SPIRAL DIRECT LTD, SPIRAL HOUSE, 29 - 35 GLADSTONE ROAD, CROYDON, SURREY, CR0 2BQ.
OR BY CREDIT CARD SIMPLY ORDER ON OUR FREEPHONE HOTLINE 0500 000 880 DURING 10AM & 8PM WEEKDAYS. WWW.SPIRALDIRECT.COM

## Order Form

BIZARRE NOVEMBER 2011

| CODE | PRODUCT | SIZE | QTY | VALUE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| T R 1 6 0 1 2 3 | EXAMPLE<br>One Shoulder | L | 1 | 11.99 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

*PLEASE ADD 95P + £1 PER ITEM FOR POSTAGE & PACKAGING (E.G. 2 ITEMS = £2.95)

SPIRAL GUARANTEE !
FULL REFUND OR EXCHANGE WITHIN 10 DAYS OF PURCHASE IF YOU ARE NOT FULLY SATISFIED.

*P & P £ 0.95P +£1 PER ITEM
TOTAL £

PLEASE CONTINUE ORDER ON A SEPERATE SHEET IF REQUIRED

NAME TEL NO
PLEASE FILL ALL DETAILS IN CLEAR CAPITAL LETTERS
ADDRESS
POSTCODE COUNTRY

PAYMENT METHOD: *SIGNATURE
PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX (MAKE ALL CHEQUES & POSTAL ORDERS (GBP) PAYABLE TO 'SPIRAL DIRECT')

CHEQUE(UK ONLY) ☐ POSTAL ORDER ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ VISA ☐ MAESTRO ☐ AMEX ☐

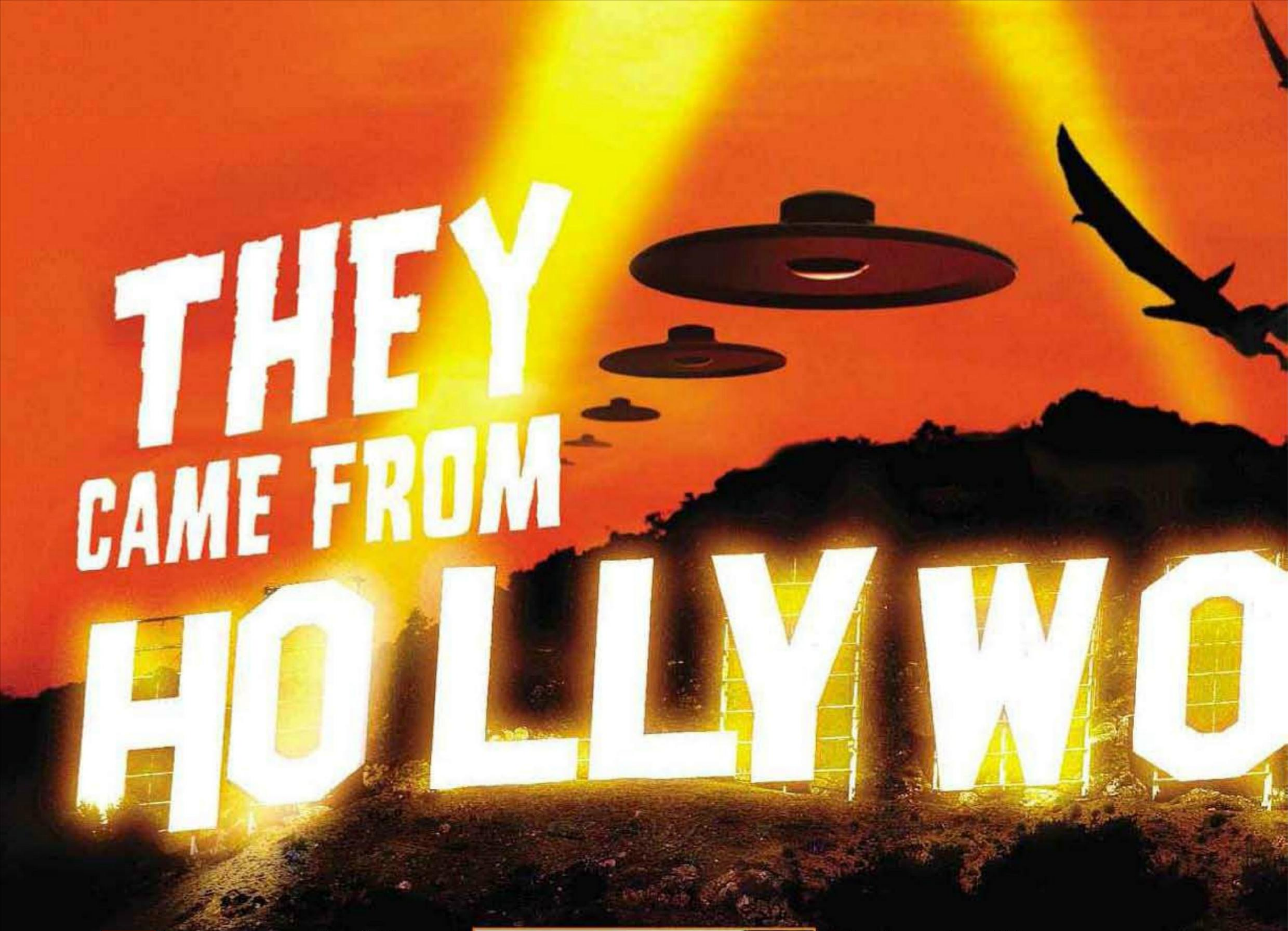
CREDIT CARD NUMBER :

START DATE EXPIRY DATE ISSUE No CVV2 No.

CVV2 = THE LAST 3 DIGITS
ON REVERSE OF CARD
(4 DIGITS FOR AMEX)

SPEND OVER £20 & GET A QUALITY T-SHIRT FREE>>

MEN'S (BLACK) ☐ XL ☐ L ☐ M
LADIES' (BLACK) ☐ L ☐ M ☐ S



# THEY CAME FROM HOLLYWO

There have been countless fictitious feature films about UFOs, monsters, ghosts and other fortean subjects, and science fiction, fantasy and horror movies are among the most popular ever made. Hundreds of millions of feet of film have been shot, both on location and in the studio, to bring these cinematic worlds to life, whether they be dramas, comedies or genre pictures. Is it possible that on a few occasions something truly anomalous was caught on camera in the background?

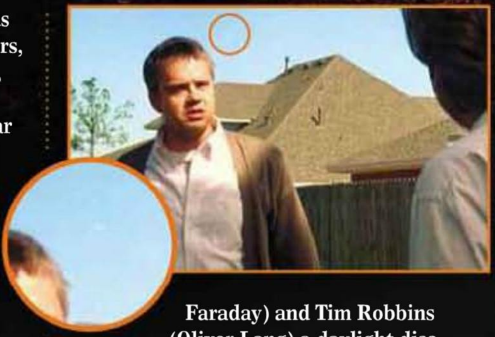
I'm not referring to claims of actors being killed on screen, such as the infamous scene from *The Wizard Of Oz* (1939) reportedly showing a dead midget who hanged himself from a tree (it's actually a large bird, by the way). This article is limited to claims of allegedly real UFOs, ghosts, and cryptids seen in the background of scenes in feature films.

## TITLE: ARLINGTON ROAD

**YEAR:** 1999
**LENGTH:** 113M
**DIRECTOR:** MARK PELLINGTON
**SCREENPLAY:** EHREN KRUGER
**STARRING:** JEFF BRIDGES, TIM ROBBINS

**STORY:** A college professor suspects his new neighbours are members of a terrorist cell.

**THE CLAIM:** During a backyard dialogue scene between Jeff Bridges (Michael Faraday) and Tim Robbins (Oliver Lang) a daylight disc (UFO) flies past in the background.



**WHEN TO LOOK:** 1hour:00min:51sec–1h:01m:01s (10 seconds duration)

**WHERE TO LOOK:** A bright white elongated object slowly crosses the screen from right to left, passes out of sight behind Tim Robbins's head and reappears momentarily on the other side before going off screen as he speaks.

**INVESTIGATION:** Duncan Hayes wrote *(FT144:52)* that this "occurs one hour and 23 seconds into the film and lasts for 15 seconds. You should see it to the right of Tim Robbins's head. The dialogue at the time is:
Bridges: "What do I call you?"
Robbins: "Who the hell do you think you are judging me…"

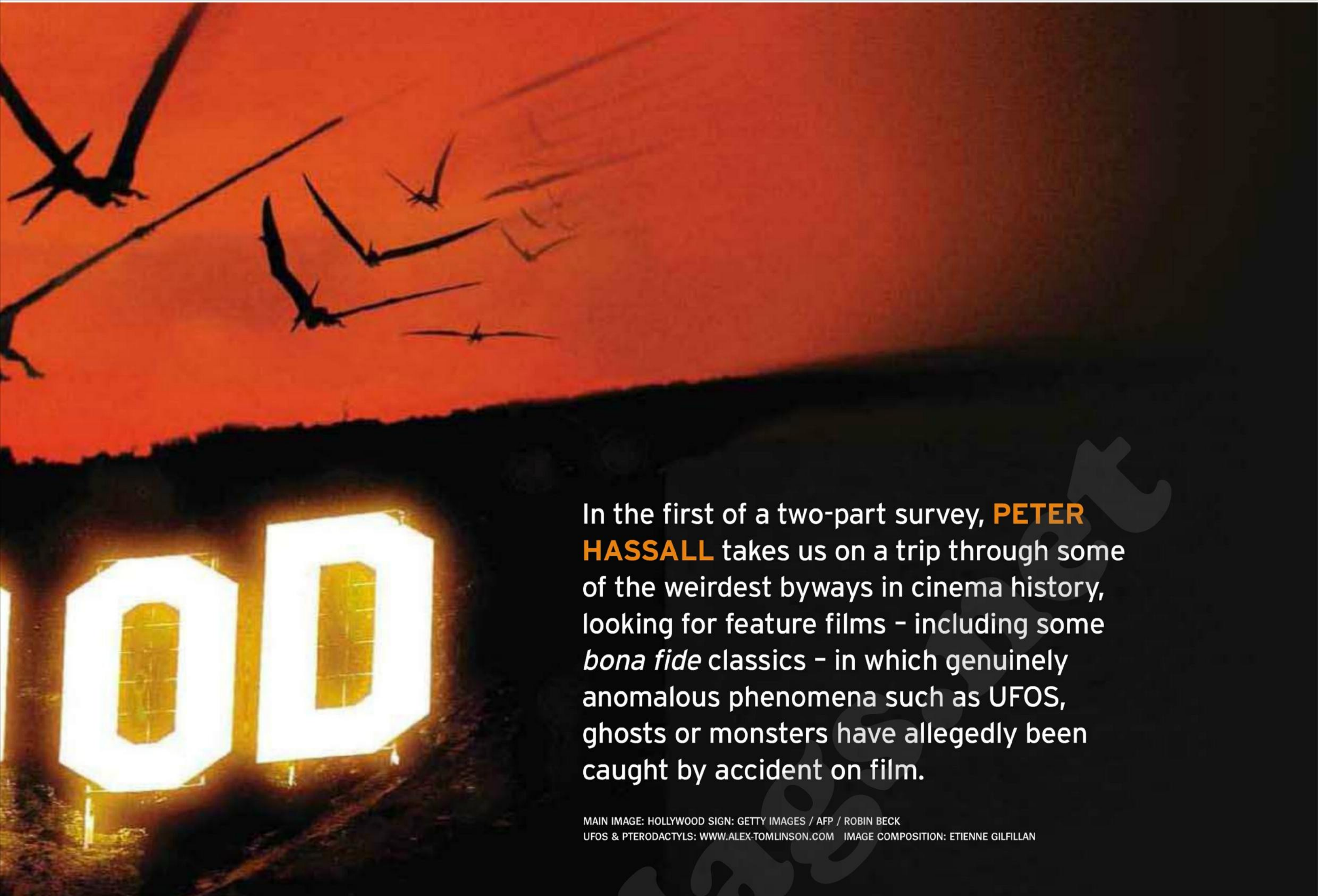
A follow-up letter by Daniel Leonard *(FT154:55)* stated the sequence "occurs 1:00:47 into the film, not 1:00:23, and lasts for 10 seconds, not 15."

When I viewed the film on DVD, the purported UFO was visible from one hour 51 seconds into the film until one hour one minute one second in. Different DVD versions may run at slightly different speeds, so it is important to note that the dialogue at the time the UFO can be seen is not that quoted by Hayes but is in fact when Robbins says "You ever worked on a farm, Michael? Make your living? Support your family?"

Leonard's letter confirms that the shadows and apparent position of the Sun would strongly suggest that sunlight reflecting off an aircraft is what is visible: "looking at the chimney to the right of the frame, it is easy to see that a plane would be at just the right angle to reflect the glare of the Sun. The wings, being edge on, do not similarly reflect the brightness reflected by the fuselage of the plane, which thus appears as a classic luminous 'cigar shaped' object. I have witnessed this myself several times" *(FT154:55)*.

This scene was filmed in Houston, Texas. A check of the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) message board for the film confirmed Leonard's idea.

User veridian6 noted on 10 Sept 2007 that: "The houses used for Michael and Oliver are in line with Houston's Hobby Airport. It is an aircraft on approach to Hobby, nothing more. I don't live too far away. The home's GPS coords are Lang's home: 29°33'7.34"N 95°13'32.57"W, Faraday's home: 29°33'5.28"N 95°13'32.30"W. Put these into GoogleEarth."[1]



In the first of a two-part survey, **PETER HASSALL** takes us on a trip through some of the weirdest byways in cinema history, looking for feature films – including some *bona fide* classics – in which genuinely anomalous phenomena such as UFOS, ghosts or monsters have allegedly been caught by accident on film.

MAIN IMAGE: HOLLYWOOD SIGN: GETTY IMAGES / AFP / ROBIN BECK
UFOS & PTERODACTYLS: WWW.ALEX-TOMLINSON.COM IMAGE COMPOSITION: ETIENNE GILFILLAN

WorldMags.net

User leisuredrummer confirmed this on 4 April 2008: "Veridian is right. I live in a neighbourhood right down the street from where they filmed those scenes. It is right along the final approach for most of the planes that come into Hobby, probably a plane, but you never know…" [2]

**CONCLUSION:** Most probably an ordinary aircraft reflecting sunlight and not a daylight disc-type UFO – although the latter possibility cannot be totally ruled out.

**ALSO LOOK OUT FOR:** An improbable but exciting car chase with a plot twist or two.

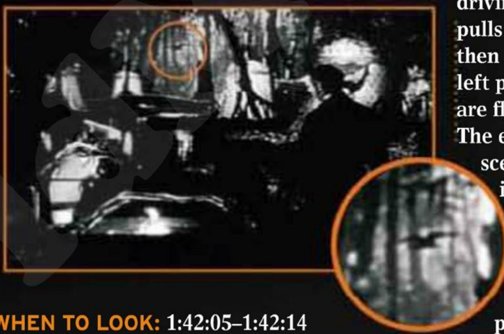
**TRIVIA:** Mark Pellington also directed the fortean-themed *The Mothman Prophecies* (2002).

## TITLE: CITIZEN KANE

**YEAR:** 1941
**LENGTH:** 119M
**DIRECTOR:** ORSON WELLES
**SCREENPLAY:** ORSON WELLES AND HERMAN J MANKIEWICZ
**STARRING:** ORSON WELLES, AGNES MOOREHEAD, JOSEPH COTTON

**STORY:** The life story of Charles Foster Kane, from his humble childhood to the creation of his vast newspaper empire.

**THE CLAIM:** Real pterodactyls fly past in the background of a picnic scene.



**WHEN TO LOOK:** 1:42:05–1:42:14 (11 seconds duration)

**WHERE TO LOOK:** In the far background one pteranodon flies left to right, another goes right to left then a third and fourth fly right to left and left to right (one above the other) at the same time.

**INVESTIGATION:** The scene occurs immediately after a shot of the convoy of cars driving to their picnic location. The camera pulls away from a close-up of a male singer then follows a man as he walks from right to left past dancing couples. The pteranodons are flying around in the far background. The extravagant outdoor dinner and dance scene is set in the Florida Everglades, so it seems slightly more credible than if it happened in a city park. Unfortunately for cryptozoologists, the scene was actually filmed on a soundstage and the background is clearly a rear screen projection shot.

GETTY IMAGES / HULTON ARCHIVE

Various film experts have stated it is footage from either *King Kong* (1933) or *Son Of Kong* (1933). Some say it was an unused outtake that happened to include stop motion animation pteranodons. I watched both movies but was unable to spot a scene with matching pteranodon movements – which would not be surprising if an unused shot was later used for *Citizen Kane.*

However, a member of the Nitpickers website noticed something that none of the so-called experts has: "This is obviously NOT a rear screen projection from an earlier film, since several tents identical to the real tents appear in the matte painting. The birds appear to be cranes or some other big wading birds, admittedly rather crudely animated. If you have ever seen this type of bird in flight you would notice they DO resemble pterodactyls (their long legs are held straight back, resembling long tails). The animation of the birds does resemble somewhat that of the seagulls flying around Skull Island in King Kong. Maybe that's how this connection was made." [3]

I can confirm the above comments. There is a continuation into the matte painting of the same style of conical tents as in the live action footage. In addition, I also found it was hard to tell the difference between apparently animated seagulls and pteranodons in *Son Of Kong*.

**CONCLUSION:** A special effect insert of birds in a fake background, not real pteranodons in a real outdoor setting.

**ALSO LOOK OUT FOR:** A marvellous tracking shot that moves through a nightclub sign and down into a skylight in the rooftop.

**TRIVIA:** The word Rosebud, as uttered by the dying Kane, was allegedly the nickname real-life magnate William Randolph Hurst used for his mistress Marion Davies's clitoris. This could explain his efforts to thwart *Citizen Kane*'s exhibition, including an attempt to buy the film negatives and destroy them.

### TITLE: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

**YEAR:** 1977
**LENGTH:** 129M
**DIRECTOR:** STEVEN SPIELBERG
**SCREENPLAY:** STEVEN SPIELBERG, MATTHEW ROBBINS AND HAL BARWOOD
**STARRING:** RICHARD DREYFUSS, FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT, MELINDA DILLON, TERI GARR

**STORY:** An ordinary man searches for answers to a strange vision after sighting UFOs.

**THE CLAIM:** A real UFO can be seen in the night sky following Roy Neary's (Richard Dreyfuss) truck in one brief shot shortly before the scene where he encounters a UFO at a railway crossing.

**WHEN TO LOOK:** There are three versions of the feature film with varying lengths due to the addition and deletion of scenes.

0:18:33–0:18:37 (four seconds duration) in the original theatrical version.

0:19:06–0:19:10 (four seconds duration) in the special edition and director's cut edition.

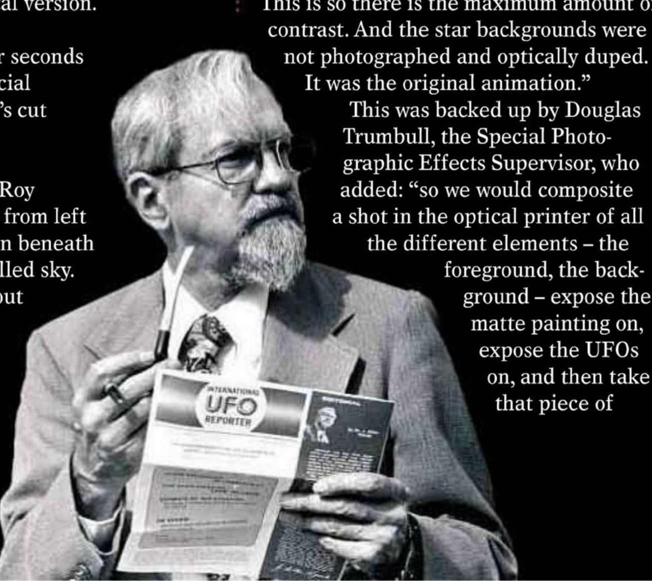
**WHERE TO LOOK:** Roy Neary's truck drives from left to right on the screen beneath a magnificent star-filled sky. One of the stars, about three-quarters of the way up the sky, moves smoothly from the left side of the screen for a short distance to the right in a straight line parallel to the ground.

**INVESTIGATION:** If this were 'true', it would be an impressive coincidence. Spielberg's film is inspired by true UFO reports; even the title comes from Dr J Allen Hynek's UFO classification system.

A rich source of information on the making of *Close Encounters* is a special double-issue of *Cinefantastique* magazine in which Richard Yuricich, the effects director of photography, comments: "Panavision steady-tested their camera for us and just gave us great cooperation; and Don Trumbull designed a special mount for us. In the end, what the system allowed us to do was shoot our front-projected miniature background onto 65mm film stock along with all the foreground action. Then we could bring it back and, in turn, add saucers or stars or other things to it. So, effectively, we had two hits at the negative." [4]

Robert Swarthe, the animation supervisor, explained the problem with making realistic star scenes for movies in a documentary: "Normally the star field is little white dots on a black background which are photographed on an animation stand. That film would be shot probably in colour negative and be developed and they'd make an interpositive and they'd go through different steps and that would go to the optical department. And those big white dots, they just look like big white dots. They don't look like stars. Because they're duped and they start getting bigger they start looking like basketballs. It's very tricky to do a realistic sky background. So the technique that we used for *Close Encounters* – which I don't know that's been done before or since – was to make a standard kind of star background of little white dots on shiny black paper. This is so there is the maximum amount of contrast. And the star backgrounds were not photographed and optically duped. It was the original animation."

This was backed up by Douglas Trumbull, the Special Photographic Effects Supervisor, who added: "so we would composite a shot in the optical printer of all the different elements – the foreground, the background – expose the matte painting on, expose the UFOs on, and then take that piece of negative before it was developed and put it on the animation stand and put the stars on as an original, undeveloped exposure. Sometimes with travelling mattes, because foreground people had to move in front of the stars. But this allowed very high quality stars that went right to the final composite negative of the film which made the stars look much crisper, brighter." [5]



According to Steven Spielberg, "One difficult thing we had to do was to create the effect of night, since about 65 per cent of the film takes place at night. There is no film fast enough to photograph night and show it as our eyes see it… So, all our night effects had to be created, had to be synthesized. It works beautifully, and I think that when you look at a night scene in the movie, you won't be aware that every night shot is a special effect." [6]

The final part of the jigsaw puzzle is a specific comment about the shot. "There was a scene in the original production where Dreyfuss is driving the truck and in the sky is a little light following him. It's a very subtle point. In the special edition they added that shot where a big shadow goes over the truck," said Robert Swarthe. [7]

**CONCLUSION:** Every source convincingly proves this is a deliberate special effects shot.

**ALSO LOOK OUT FOR:** Two surprising cameos – R2-D2 from *Star Wars*, hanging upside down on the mothership as it rises over the mountain, and Dr J Allen Hynek, (pictured below) walking forwards, stroking his goatee and putting his pipe in his mouth as the stunned airmen from Flight 19 exit the mothership.

**TRIVIA:** Uncredited co-writers Matthew Robbins and Hal Barwood have cameos as returned Flight 19 pilots.

### TITLE: THE GODFATHER

**YEAR:** 1972
**LENGTH:** 168M (IMDB SAYS 175M BUT MY DVD COPY IS SHORTER THAN THAT)
**DIRECTOR:** FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
**SCREENPLAY:** MARIO PUZO AND FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA (BASED ON THE NOVEL BY MARIO PUZO)
**STARRING:** MARLON BRANDO, AL PACINO, JAMES CAAN, ROBERT DUVALL, MORGANA KING

**STORY:** An epic portrayal of the life and times of a Mafia don and his family.

**THE CLAIM:** A ghost is visible during the funeral scene.

**WHEN TO LOOK:** 2:28:22–2:28:26 (four seconds duration).

**WHERE TO LOOK:** Tessio says "Mike, can I have a minute," and Al Pacino (Michael Corleone) stands up. As he does so, a ghostly face is visible on the right side of the screen against the black of

his suit next to his left arm (he is facing the camera). The first couple of times I looked out for the ghostly face, I missed it. It doesn't become visible until Al Pacino stands, and then can only be seen for a few seconds. I was expecting to see a shadowy figure in the far background, but the 'ghost' is a close view of a woman's face and is large on the screen. Once you have noticed it, it is obvious and cannot be missed.

**INVESTIGATION:** This one was easy, as Roger Ebert had already done all the legwork for me. He writes the "Answer Man" newspaper column, and after readers wrote to him asking about the ghostly face, Ebert asked Kim Aubry (producer of the *Godfather* series DVDs) to look at the scene. He replied:

"Look closer, especially at the preceding shots. It's Morgana King (who is sitting next to Pacino) being reflected, probably by a filter in the matte box, explaining the orange hue. Look again even more closely. What is less explained: Why is she chewing gum at her husband's funeral?!? Francis and I just studied this little scene on the DVD, and her gum chewing was especially vexing to him and amusing to me. (Of course, she thought she was off camera.)" [8]

**CONCLUSION:** An accidental reflection of an actress.

**ALSO LOOK OUT FOR:** The infamous scene when the owner of a racehorse wakes to find its bloody severed head in his bed.

**TRIVIA:** The white cat that Marlon Brando pats as it sits on his lap was allegedly a stray found wandering around the studio back lot.

## TITLE: IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA

**YEAR:** 1955
**LENGTH:** 79M
**DIRECTOR:** ROBERT GORDON
**SCREENPLAY:** GEORGE WORTHING YATES AND HAL SMITH
**STARRING:** KENNETH TOBEY, DONALD CURTIS, FAITH DOMERGUE

**STORY:** A submarine and its crew try to save San Francisco from a giant octopus spawned by nuclear radiation.

**THE CLAIM:** A UFO can be seen in the background of a scene after the submarine surfaces. "When the sub surfaces, there is a scene where the Commander is on the deck and his first officer comes out of the sub and walks toward him. This is where in the top right-hand corner of the screen you see a white dash-like object sort of loop into then out of the picture. A few seconds later, it shoots very quickly across the complete top of the screen!" (from an email posted by Brett A Martin to the fantasticreality Yahoo! group on 18 Nov 2006).

**WHEN TO LOOK:** 0:10:38–0:10:44 (six seconds duration).

**WHERE TO LOOK:** In the background at the top right of the screen a white object moves in a loop (the Commander says "What's on your mind, Girth?" at this point. Immediately afterwards, a white object quickly crosses the screen (near the top of the frame) from right to left. Girth says, "Stern planes are fouled – show signs of radioactivity."

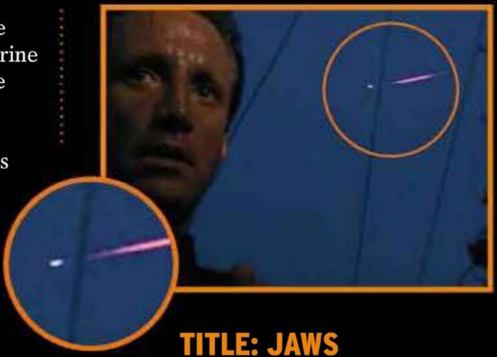
**INVESTIGATION:** No great amount of effort was required to solve this one. The slightly elongated white objects move just like birds. It looks like the first white object (performing a loop movement) is a seagull coasting in place on air currents as it faces the camera. The second white object looks like another seagull flying past (at a right angle to the camera). Anybody who has seen seagulls at the coast will recognise them as such.

**CONCLUSION:** Seagulls – not UFOs.

**ALSO LOOK OUT FOR:** Tentacles crushing pedestrians and flamethrowers versus tentacles!

**TRIVIA:** Due to a tight budget, Ray Harryhausen's stop motion animated giant octopus only had six tentacles.

COLUMBIA PICTURES presents
IT
CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA
KENNETH TOBEY · FAITH DOMERGUE · DONALD CURTIS
Screenplay by GEORGE WORTHING YATES & HAL SMITH · Technical Effects Created by RAY HARRYHAUSEN
Executive Producer SAM KATZMAN · Produced by CHARLES E. SCHNEER · Directed by ROBERT GORDON



## TITLE: JAWS

**YEAR:** 1975
**LENGTH:** 124M
**DIRECTOR:** STEVEN SPIELBERG
**SCREENPLAY:** PETER BENCHLEY AND CARL GOTTLIEB (BASED ON THE NOVEL *JAWS* BY PETER BENCHLEY)
**STARRING:** ROY SCHEIDER, RICHARD DREYFUSS, ROBERT SHAW, LORRAINE GARY

**STORY:** A killer shark terrorises the citizens of a small coastal town.

**THE CLAIM:** UFOs (or meteors) appear in the background of a scene. "Immediately following the discussion of the sinking of the *USS Indianapolis* toward the end of World War II, the three actors move from the cabin of the fishing boat to the deck. In rapid sequence, two small, brightly lighted objects are seen streaking across the sky behind one of the actors". [9]

Also, *FT* reader Garrick Alder wrote that a "small, bright, pulsating, cigar-shaped object travels slowly across the sky, leaving a short glowing trail behind it as it goes. When I first noticed this, my amazement was immediately tempered by the fact that this was, after all, a Stephen Spielberg film; and my suspicions were deepened in the very next scene, which shows the *Orca* and crew some hours later, in morning daylight, with an identical 'UFO' travelling in the opposite direction." (**FT160:55**)

**WHEN TO LOOK:** 1:32:08–1:32:11 (four seconds duration) and 1:32:19–1:32:21 (two seconds duration).

**WHERE TO LOOK:** There are two different scenes in which something strange can be seen. The first meteor streaks across the screen from right to left on a downward angle (passing behind Roy Scheider's head as it does so) when he is on the deck of the *Orca* loading his gun after Jaws has attacked the boat (immediately after the famous *Indianapolis* sinking speech and a rousing song below decks). The next shot is a side view of the *Orca* moving from left to right across the screen. A meteor is briefly visible when it enters the frame at the very top left corner of the screen. It falls at a downward angle from left to right, travelling about one-third of the way across the frame until it disappears in clouds about two-thirds of the way up from the bottom of the frame.

worldmags.net

**INVESTIGATION:** There is a great deal of online speculation about the two shooting stars. Some people say they are real meteors and others say they are real UFOs.

There are two books about the making of *Jaws*: *The Jaws Log* by Carl Gottlieb (Tandem, 1975) and *The Making of the Movie Jaws* by Edith Blake (Ballantine, 1975). Neither has any mention that two real meteors were seen and filmed. I am sure they would have been noteworthy enough to comment on. Also, the book *On Jaws* by Nigel Andrews (Bloomsbury, 1999) – billed as "the ultimate A–Z" – is equally unhelpful. All it says is to look out for a (single) shooting star.

New Zealand film-maker Mark Willis pointed out to me that the two shots the meteors appear in had obviously been filmed day-for-night. A special filter was used on the camera lens to give the impression that the scenes were at night, when they were actually filmed in the daytime. This used to be a very common technique in film-making but is now almost never used.

This important fact shows that any claim about real shooting stars is false. Only a much larger bolide would be visible during the day – not something the size of an ordinary shooting star.

There would have been many witnesses on shore to such an event (although the *Orca* scenes are meant to be far out at sea, they were actually close to land and filming was constantly interrupted as the crew waited for yachts and other sea craft that spoilt the impression the three protagonists were alone at sea to move out of frame).

There is only one possible explanation – the shooting stars were optically added after filming in post-production. But why would Spielberg do that?

One suggestion is that they were an attempt to disguise planes that flew past in the background. Clearly this is incorrect, as a plane would not fly at such a sharp downward angle.

It has also been variously suggested "This was Spielberg's… forewarning us to 'watch the skies' for his next movie… (*Close Encounters*, of course)" [10] or that it was his 'signature' in his films – for example: "Yeah, the shooting star was a one-time Spielberg trademark. Besides the examples you cite, I know he also used it in *Temple of Doom* and even the trailer for *Twilight Zone The Movie*. Unless I'm mistaken, they weren't used in every movie he made during the period, but it was certainly intentional enough to be a semi-trademark." [11]

Also, see letters making the same comments in **FT160:55** and **FT163:52**.

The real reason can be found in a 1978 interview with Spielberg about his next movie, *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. The original idea for that film came when Spielberg was only five years old:

"One night my dad woke me up in the middle of the night and rushed me into our car in my night clothes. I didn't know what was happening. It was frightening. My mom wasn't with me. So I thought, 'What's happening here?' He had a thermos of coffee and had brought blankets, and we drove for about half an hour. We finally pulled over to the side of the road, and there were a couple of hundred people lying on their backs in the middle of the night, looking up at the sky. My dad found a place, spread the blanket out, and we both lay down.

"He pointed to the sky, and there was a magnificent meteor shower. All these incredible points of light were crisscrossing the sky. It was a phenomenal display, apparently announced in advance by the weather bureau. My dad had really surprised me – actually, he'd frightened the hell out of me! At the same time though, I was tremendously attracted to the source, to what was causing this. Years later we got a telescope, and I was into stargazing." [12]

**CONCLUSION:** Not real UFOs or meteors but optical effects added in post production.

**ALSO LOOK OUT FOR:** The now much-copied and parodied zoom/track effect as the camera closes in on Brody when he spots the shark at the beach.

**TRIVIA:** The mechanical shark (there were really three) created by the special effects department was nicknamed Bruce in honour of Spielberg's lawyer.

## TITLE: LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT

**YEAR:** 1927
**LENGTH:** UNKNOWN
**DIRECTOR:** TOD BROWNING
**SCREENPLAY:** TOD BROWNING
**STARRING:** LON CHANEY

**STORY:** There are strange occupants in the abandoned home of a dead man – could they be vampires?

**THE CLAIMS:** A time-travelling Mariah Carey doppelgänger, a 1974 digital alarm clock, a 1985 Coleman battery-powered lantern and real vampires can all be seen on screen in various scenes in the 1927 movie. These extraordinary claims were made in the "From The UFO Files" section of the 27 August 2002 edition of the weekly email newsletter *UFO Roundup* (Vol.7 No.35).

**WHEN TO LOOK:** Various scenes

**WHERE TO LOOK:** Unknown

**INVESTIGATION:** It is not clear who wrote the article (apparently it was not the newsletter's editor, Joseph Trainor, as he added some factual comments). It reads like an account of somebody who saw the film firsthand. If so, they could not have viewed it for many years as the last known print of the film was destroyed in an MGM studio fire in 1965 (or 1967 depending upon which source you believe).

The article, entitled "1927: Hooray for Hollyweird", starts with a question: "Movie trivia time! What was pop diva Mariah Carey's feature film debut? Answer: A 1999 film, *The Bachelor*, which starred Chris O'Donnell and Renee Zellweger. Mariah had a small part as an opera singer. Right? Well… maybe…" [13]

It goes on to say there is a scene when Chaney is interviewing a witness at a theatre and in the background is briefly seen a young opera singer who looks just like Mariah Carey. Carey was born on 27 March 1970, so unless she travelled in time and returned, the now 41-year-old could not be the woman in the film.

But does a Mariah Carey lookalike really appear in the film? And what about the other claims? As mentioned above, there is no surviving print of *London After Midnight*. The closest we have to a copy of the film is a 2002 reconstruction made up of photographs with captions (done by Rick Schmidlin in 2002 for TCM).

Watching the reconstruction, there is no scene in a theatre; neither does the script mention such a scene,

so the Mariah Carey claim is busted.

Also, no matter how hard I looked, there was nothing remotely like a digital alarm clock visible in any scene let alone “in the background of Conrad Nagel’s bedroom at the manor”.[14]

The claim about real vampires appearing on screen is highly speculative. The article states: “According to this legend, Chaney undertook the challenge of making a vampire appear on film. As everyone knows, a vampire casts no reflection in a mirror. Nor can it appear in a photograph, film clip or videotape. The task seemed impossible, but allegedly Chaney was willing to give it a try. If anyone could do it, Lon Chaney could… All he had to do was spray the vampires’ faces with a fine latex solution. After this dried, he could have peeled off the ‘mask’ of the vampire’s face, coloured it with the right dyes to evoke silent-movie makeup, and then have the vampires slip on their ‘faces’ before the film shooting began.”[15]

The above suggestion assumes that real vampires exist, that Lon Chaney knew some and that they were willing to risk exposure to the public. The obvious question, even if any of this were true, is why?

The article continues: “All of which has paranormal enthusiasts wondering about the mysterious Edna Tichenor, who played ‘Lunette’. She has only two other film credits listed, both of them horror films. The first was *The Show*, in which she played ‘Koko, the Human Spider’. The second was 1934’s *The Black Moon*, after which she sort of dropped out of sight.

“Even more puzzling is actor Andy McLellan [*sic*]. *London After Midnight* is his one and only film credit. What happened to Andy after 1927, no one knows.”[16]

The short-lived careers of these two actors should not come as a surprise when the era of the film – right on the cusp of the sound era – is considered. Many silent movie era actors and actresses failed to make the transition to “talkies” as they didn’t have the right voices for the new medium. Edna Tichenor was one. According to IMDB, she actually had 10 movie credits in all but did not survive the transition to sound.

There is also some biographical information on her life, so she would not seem to have been a real vampire as is suggested. Similarly, Andy MacLennan actually had 10 film credits from 1921–1927. According to IMDB, he died on 30 May 1964 (aged 85) in Santa Clara, California. Again, not a vampire.

The most interesting claim in the *UFO Roundup* article is about the use of a modern battery-powered Coleman lantern: “Look closely at the scene in the manor’s Great Hall in which actress Edna Tichenor, who plays ‘Lunette, the female vampire’ puts the bite on the movie’s female lead, actress Marceline Day. The caretaker is holding a Coleman battery-powered lantern. The kind that Coleman put on the market in 1985.”[17]

Fortunately, there are numerous photos of scenes from *London After Midnight* showing a lantern. Every area of human invention from sick-bags to Pez containers has its own enthusiasts and collectors, and lanterns are no exception. So I went to the experts.

An initial inquiry to the webmaster at the Coleman lantern site elicited the interesting reply, “Would love to help but the lantern in the four photos sent is not a Coleman.”

Dave DeFrates at the Coleman Collectors Club thought the “images don’t look like any Coleman lantern”, and, after consulting with Terrence Walsh, added: “All the lanterns in your images appear to be wick type. The only wick-type lanterns Coleman produced were made in 1939 and were lamps, not lanterns.”

Jeff Polston, who has an informative lantern site,[18] gave me the following details: “While it is possible that they may have powered it by battery for the film, it definitely wasn’t designed that way. It looks like a Dietz No.6 lantern [pictured above]. Those were powered by oil and/or kerosene. Also, it is a lantern mainly used by the railroad (not a standard barn-style lantern that people used in their homes for general lighting… There are other, very similar lanterns, but the Dietz model was more popular and abundant, thus I’m pretty sure that’s the one used in the movie.

“The Dietz No.6 lantern was originally made by the Steam Gauge and Lantern Company of Syracuse, New York. It went into production in 1895. The RE Dietz Company Inc. bought Steam Gauge in 1898, thus acquiring the ownership of the No.6 lantern. A 1902 Dietz catalogue described it as the ‘New York Central Pattern’, noting that the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad used this lantern exclusively. The lantern was designed to burn signal oil. The Dietz No.6 could also be furnished with a convex burner for burning kerosene. Around the turn of the century, railroads urged lantern manufacturers to switch to kerosene.”

There is always a slim possibility that one day a complete or partial print of the film may be found. Current claims at various websites that the film has already been found are either hoaxes or extremely unlikely and unverified claims that have been heavily criticised.[19]

**CONCLUSION:** None of the varied claims about evidence hinting at time travel stack up under examination. The claim that some of the cast were vampires is similarly suspect.

**ALSO LOOK OUT FOR:** The truly immortal Lon Chaney.

**TRIVIA:** Lon Chaney was known as the “Man of a Thousand Faces” due to doing his own makeup for the multitude of varied characters he played (ranging from *The Phantom Of The Opera* to *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame*). He was the inspiration for a young Tom Savini to become a special effects makeup artist, actor and stuntman. FT

## NOTES

**1** http://imdb.to/seSWqb (IMDB).

**2** http://imdb.to/t3jq8V (IMDB).

**3** Comment by nitpicker 18533 on 22 Jan 2008 12:29 pm in response to nitpick 17120 by nitpicker 9188 at http://bit.ly/tqQMQC (nitpickers.com).

**4** Don Shay: “Close Encounters at Future General: Interviews with Douglas Trumbull and his Future general effects staff”, *Cinefantastique*, Vol.7 No.3 / No.4, p42.

**5** Quotes taken from part two of the documentary *The Making Of Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* on disc two of the 30th Anniversary Ultimate Edition *Close Encounters* box set (2007).

**6** “Penthouse Interview Steven Spielberg”, *Penthouse*, Feb 1978, p102.

**7** *The Making Of Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*.

**8** Roger Ebert: “Busting ‘Godfather’ ghost” by *Chicago Sun-Times*, 16 Dec 2001. (No longer on website).

**9** http://bit.ly/vw7tyb (nuforc.org).

**10** Contributed by user armiller on 4 Sept 2000 at http://bit.ly/u60Mtq (eeggs.com).

**11** User Steven Await on 21 Feb 2006 at spielbergfilms.com discussion group.

**12** “Penthouse Interview Steven Spielberg”, *Penthouse*, Feb 1978, p102.

**13** UFO Roundup (Vol.7 No.35) Stored online at http://bit.ly/t4su6G (ufoinfo.com).

**14** *Ibid*.

**15** *Ibid*.

**16** *Ibid*.

**17** *Ibid*.

**18** http://bit.ly/t0mPM0 (jeffpolston.com). See also Richard C Barret: *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Railroad Lighting, Vol.1, The Railroad Lantern*, pp107, 108, 304, 305 (Railroad Research Publications, Rochester, New York, First Printing: Mar 1994, Second Printing: Nov 1998, Third Printing: Aug 2003).

**19** See http://bit.ly/s8d7IB (michaelgebert.com) and http://bit.ly/f3FNoU (thehorrordrunx.yuku.com).

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**PETER HASSELL** is a stuntman and fight choreographer. He is interested in a range of forteana. When he has the time, he writes for FT, and has written about New Zealand UFOs in *The NZ Files* (1998).

# A UFO IN THE YEAR 1561

A famous woodcut from Nuremberg has often been adduced as evidence of a major early UFO sighting. **ULRICH MAGIN** takes a closer look at this misunderstood image and offers an alternative explanation.

Since Carl Gustav Jung used it in his 1958 psychoanalytic book on flying saucers, *Ein moderner Mythus – Von Dingen, die am Himmel gesehen werden* (*Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*),[1] the image from a broadsheet printed in 1561 (facing page) has become the classic representation of an early UFO observation. Jung had only used it to indicate a certain continuity in the way strange aerial observations were described. Ufologists have turned his suggestion into the idea that a "mothership" with several "scout ships" appeared over Nuremberg in the 16th century. The picture is often reprinted, but never understood.

On 14 April 1561, says the author and printer Hanns Glaser, something strange had been seen in the sky over Nuremberg – "a very frightening vision".

It happened at dusk and was observed "by many men and women". The text describes many blood-red, blue, and black "balls" or "ring discs" near the Sun. "They were three alongside each other / sometimes four in a square, and several alone / and between these balls blood-coloured crosses were seen." In addition, "two great pipes" were observed, "in which smaller or larger pipes / were three / and also four or more balls. They all started to fight against each other." The battle lasted about an hour, then "all is like drawn by the sun / from the sky down to the earth as if it all was burning it fell / and with a great steam it vanished on the ground." Situated below the balls was a longish object "which resembled a large black spear". This "vision" was taken as a warning from God.

Phantom armies represented spirits of the dead on a battlefield

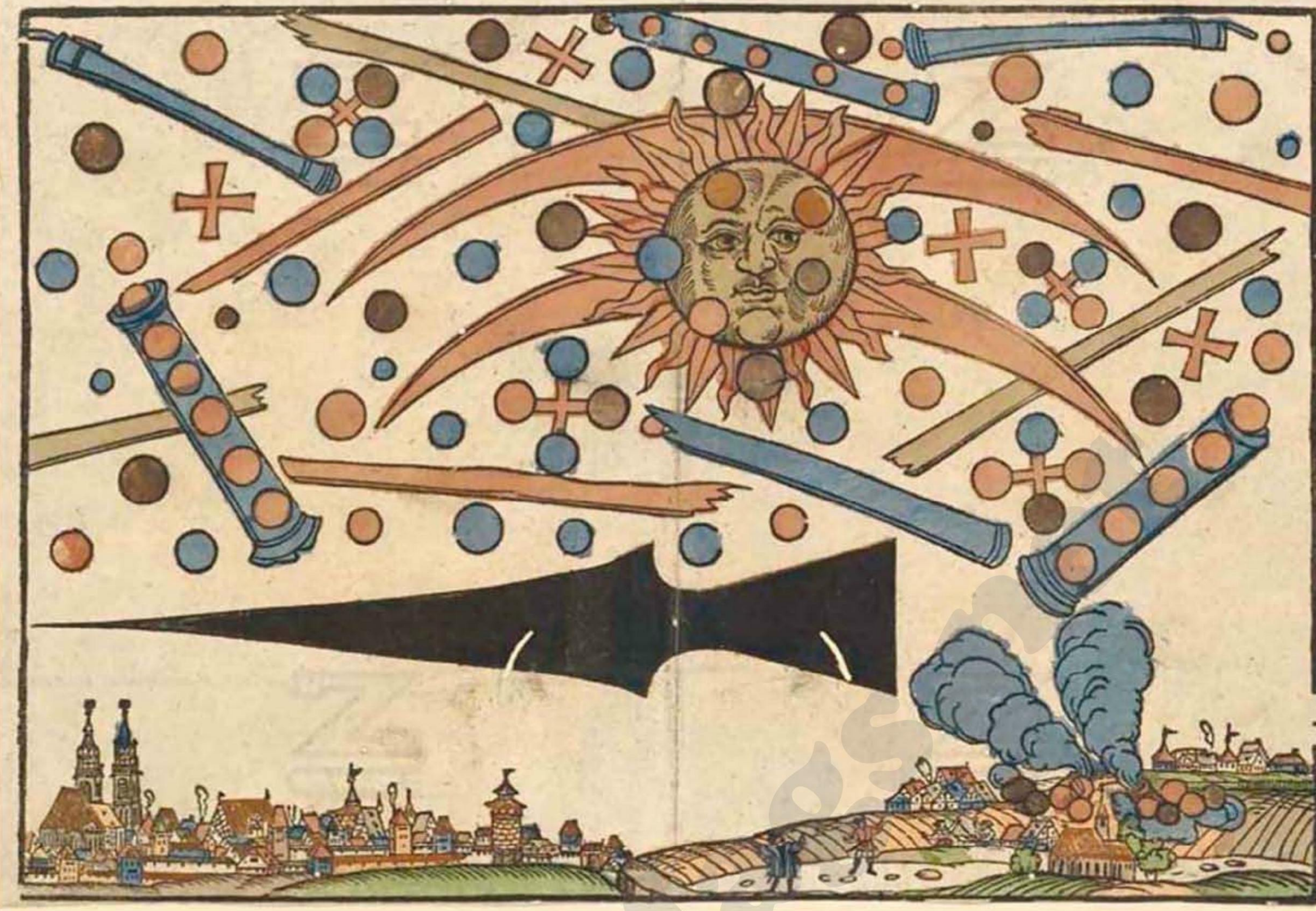
## PHANTOM ARMIES

The individual objects battling against each other, the spear, the fire, the blood-red colour, the designation as a "fight", as well as the divine warning and the bleeding crosses clearly indicate that the text was to be read in the tradition of reports of sky battles between phantom armies. These were among the miracles and prodigies most frequently printed at the time. They were universally interpreted as prodigies or dark omens. This comes as no surprise, as most newspapers of the 16th century were above all theological admonishments, and the "miracle" they told their readers about was more often than not just an arbitrarily chosen example, not the main reason for the story. "It was the interpretation of the phenomena that matters: they were carefully compiled and reported as signs of the cosmic battle being waged between the factions of Reformation Europe," as the folklorist Jeremy Harte explains. The wonder was less important than what it heralded.[2]

The phantom army is a genuine Jewish-Christian motif. In classical antiquity, it was hardly known. Phantom armies, in classical writings, were spirits of the dead on a battlefield (for example, in Homer's *Iliad* there are sections where the gods intervened in the war, but no examples of armies in the sky). Among the 16th-century broadsheets, in contrast, one finds several dozen such stories that tell of two mounted armies battling each other under the thunder and the noise of weapons, shooting arrows and drawing swords.

The motif of the phantom army is first mentioned in the Bible, in the Books of the Maccabees which form part of the Catholic Old Testament (Luther deleted them from the Protestant canon). The second Book of the Maccabees, which is generally considered more reliable historically than the first, mentions sky armies in two places. The first of these is the model on which the later European reports were based: "About the same time Antiochus prepared his second voyage into Egypt: And then it happened, that through all the city, for the space almost of forty days, there were seen horsemen running in the air, in cloth of gold, and armed with lances, like a band of soldiers, and troops of horsemen in array, encountering and running one against another, with shaking of shields, and multitude of pikes, and drawing of swords, and casting of darts, and glittering of golden ornaments, and harness of all sorts. Wherefore every man prayed that that apparition might turn to good." (2 Maccabees ch5, vv1–4)

And: "But when the battle waxed strong, there appeared unto the enemies from



heaven five comely men upon horses, with bridles of gold, and two of them led the Jews, and took Maccabeus between them, and covered him on every side with weapons, and kept him safe, but shot arrows and lightnings against the enemies: so that being confounded with blindness, and full of trouble, they were killed. And there were slain of footmen twenty thousand and five hundred, and six hundred horsemen." (2 Maccabees ch10, vv29–31)

Another version of the first tale can be found in Josephus (*Antiquitates Judaicæ*, 12:237 to 13:226), and even in the verses of the Koran about the battle of Badr (Sura 3, 125) we find a faint echo of the motif. It was well known to scholars of the 16th century.

Newssheets of the time often did not report real events but were more concerned with getting across a message. Often, a printer would use a sheet describing a celestial sign (be it a volcanic eruption, a meteorite fall, or a northern light), change only the time and place, and rewrite the text until it fitted his intentions – and so there would be more news to sell.

Phantom armies in the sky were a favourite subject and conformed to a traditional template: there are two armies in the sky, often mounted on horses, and they battle each other with flags, spears and arrows until one army is defeated. This spectacle is then interpreted as a warning of war, famine, or pestilence. The last paragraph, following the description and warning, consists of a few lines imploring people to change their ways and lead Christian lives. Most illustrations show not just the struggling armies, but also falling stars (alluding to *Revelation*, ch19), spears, crosses, arrows, and other symbols hovering in the sky around the combatants.

To give just one example: On 1 June 1554, shortly after sunrise, a certain Leonhardt Kellner as well as "the priest and the whole congregation" observed "a bloody and fiery streak" over Plech near Nuremberg. "After this, blue stars were seen / or balls / in a size / of coins [?] / which came up from sunrise [East]. On this came horsemen […] who ran … up and down for two hours / and fought with lances / But the stars went over them at all the time […] and later were let down unto the ground. […] All this was so horrible to behold" that each and everyone thought Judgment Day had come. "Yet when stars and horsemen came close to the market / there was a falling / and swoosh / as if something had fallen into water. Yet soon everything went back high against the sun / and the horsemen started again / as before / to battle for two hours / and then all vanished."

A postscript explained what this was all about: it was a warning from the Lord. People should "be handy / in holy conduct and godly ways / because we wait / and hurry into the future of the Day / of the LORD / when Heaven becomes fire / and the elements will smelt in heat." [3]

What is seen in the skies is only a preview of what awaits us on Judgment Day, when the heavens will be on fire, a fire in which all matter dissolves; those who still can had better change their ways. In this Nuremberg 'sign' of two sky armies battling with lances, we already find all elements of the later Nuremberg "UFO report". The only thing missing is the two "pipes" (usually translated as "cylinders" in the ufological literature); the balls falling from the sky, the smoke, even the time shortly after sunrise are identical.

## SIGNS AND WONDERS

So what do the Nuremberg 'mothership' and the flying discs have in common with spears and horsemen?

The 1561 Nuremberg woodcut simply shows the old motif of sky armies fighting, only in his version Glaser updated and modernised the old-fashioned elements. In place of conventional weapons and mounted fighters, he now depicts modern cannon, which fight each other with burning balls. Of the traditional forms, only the falling stars and the spear remain, which now float isolated in the sky.

The "pipe", which many UFO researchers have called a "mothership" and which Jacques Vallée has compared to his UFO category of "cloud cigars", is simply a cannon. The text even says so, as "Rohr" (the word Glaser uses) is the old German word for cannon, although in modern usage it means pipe. When Glaser writes that there were "pipes" in the sky, his contemporary audience would have read "cannon". And if we no longer have two unidentified metal pipes battling against each other, but two cannon shooting against each other, we immediately recognise this as the traditional sky battle motif, updated and illustrated in a way that made more sense to a contemporary audience than armies on horseback at a time when cannon began to be widely used in warfare. The cannon were Glaser's only innovation, and he had no way of knowing that a later age, blinded by the balls and apparent mothership, would be unable to understand his text correctly. He wrote for his time, knowing nothing of the atomic age and space travel; but he certainly had read piles of newssheets concerning celestial signs.

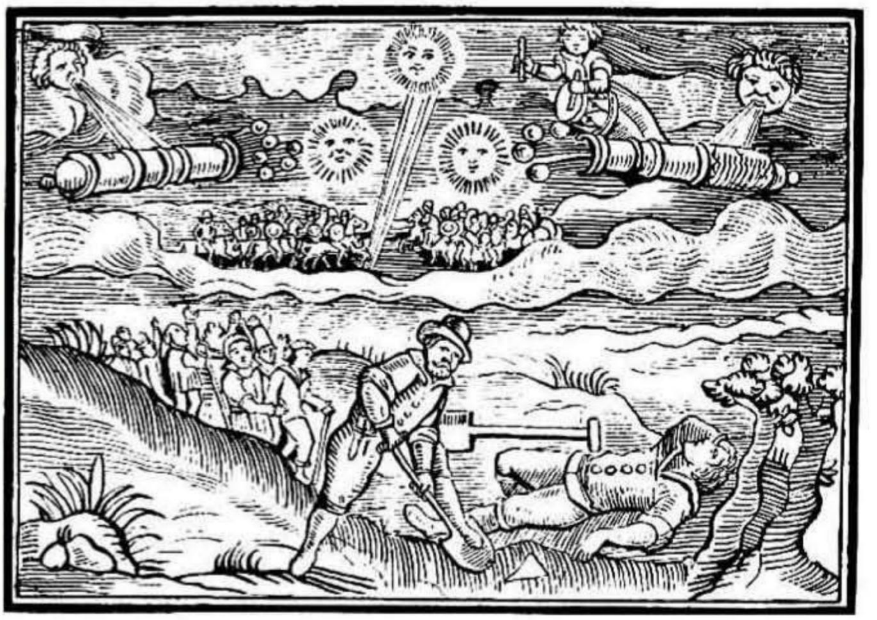
Looking at the illustrations, one notices immediately that Glaser, who knew Nuremberg well (he lived in southern Germany from 1540 to 1571), does not show the famous castle that towers over the city. Furthermore, a local historian has proven conclusively that the smoking balls touch ground at St Leonhard's church, a building that had been destroyed in 1508![4] Clearly, we cannot regard Glaser's illustration as a depiction of anything that actually happened, nor would his audience have read it as such.

In addition, only two months earlier a pamphlet had been printed describing a northern light that had appeared on 27 February 1561, near Eisleben. The text speaks of two columns of smoke, a rod (for punishment), and a cross. This sheet had been printed by Georg Kreydlein in Nuremberg. A different version, printed in Augsburg, speaks of "two ash-coloured columns" and interprets them as "two horrible enemies / which are the Muscowite and the Turk". Another variant, printed in Erfurt, interprets the two columns as "the schisms in the teachings of the Church".[5] We find the smoke and the cross in the Nuremberg sheet as well, and the columns very much recall the cannon seen here.

The completely skewed geography of Nuremberg, and the fact that all the elements of the tale had been seen there before – in broadsheets printed in Nuremberg (Plech and Eisleben) concerning completely different matters – vividly indicate that we cannot read Glaser's text and image as we would a modern newspaper account of something that happened at a specific place at a certain date. Glaser wrote no eyewitness report, but a warning that completely conformed to the standard format. He introduced only one new element – that of the cannon – that gave him everlasting fame among ufologists.

So, the "motherships" are cannon, the flying saucers cannonballs, and all this was reported not because something strange had been observed in the sky, but because Glaser intended to spread a religious message. The readers of Nuremberg would not have wondered why their city was depicted falsely, because they would have read the sheet not as journalism, but as a call to repent. A literal interpretation (where did the cannon appear, and at which place precisely did the balls crash to earth?) is bound to fail.

Whether something actually happened over Nuremberg at that time (a meteorite fall or an aurora), we do not know and can probably never know. We only know that the broadsheet doesn't report anything that had not been described to its audience before, in other broadsheets, and which they understood in the light of their religious education – celestial signs were a reminder of the Day of Judgment on which, as the Bible says, stars would fall down from Heaven. The miracle of Plech still has the falling stars as a distinct element, and Glaser skilfully combined the cannon, the balls, and the falling stars into a single image. In this way, he modernised an old tradition to perfectly reflect the fears of the 16th century.



**ABOVE:** This woodcut of the April 1628 Hatford meteorite fall clearly shows the barrels of cannon and cannonballs being fired.

## PIPES OVER OXFORDSHIRE

Just as Glaser used reports on the northern lights at Eisleben and the accounts of battling phantom armies in the sky to create his famous woodcut, an English printer 70 years later used the imagery of the Nuremberg report to dress up his own work.

It is a woodcut that tells of a meteorite fall – one that actually happened – on 9 April 1628 in Hatford, near Oxford (see **FT143:34–38**). The image shows – in addition to the falling stone – three suns in the sky as well as two pipes (clearly recognisable as cannon), which fire the balls – an image practically identical to that used in the Nuremberg woodcut.[6] Here, the cannon symbolise the bang the meteorite made; which, again, only shows how adaptable these standard descriptions of prodigies were to different kinds of actual events.

The Oxford broadsheet confirms that such broadsheets do not offer literal reports of what might have happened, but interpret events using – in text as well as illustration – other, previously published models. What event (if any) actually took place and inspired the famous Nuremberg woodcut can no longer be determined – but we can be totally certain that it was not a UFO in the modern sense, and that the Nuremberg "pipes" are not motherships, but instead symbolise two enemy armies. 'Motherships from outer space' is a modern interpretation, and one with no facts to support it. And it's an interpretation that robs the intended meaning from these old news reports, which simply wanted to preach to the converted and warn the impious to mend their ways.

INVESTIGATING THE IMPOSSIBLE
Ulrich Magin

Extracted from the book *Investigating the Impossible: Sea-Serpents in the Air, Volcanoes that Aren't, and Other Out-of-Place Mysteries*, published by Anomalist Books (AnomalistBooks.com).

## NOTES

1 CG Jung: *Ein moderner Mythus – Von Dingen, die am Himmel gesehen werden*, Walther, 1958 (English title: *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*).

2 Jeremy Harte in *3rd Stone* 41, 2001/2002, p65, referring to Alexandra Walsham: "Sermons in the sky: apparitions in early modern Europe", *History Today*, 2001, pp56–63.

3 Ulrich Magin: *Kontakte mit Außerirdischen im deutschen Sprachraum*, GEP, 1999, p46.

4 www.rafa.at/29ufos.htm.

5 www.wunderzeichen.de.

6 **FT44:50**.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Ulrich Magin has contributed to many fortean magazines and has written books on ufology, geomancy, cryptozoology and Charles Fort. He lives in Germany with three budgies.

DinoPC.com
0844 999 4123

Select your BEAST!

**Gallant AMD 560**

AMD Phenom II X2 560 Black Edition
Gigabyte M68MT-S2P Motherboard
Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit
4GB DDR3 RAM
NVIDIA GeForce GTX 550 Ti 1GB
500GB S-ATAIII HDD
Xigmatek Case + Xigmatek PSU

£395
inc. VAT

**Alioramus 2500K OC @ 4.5Ghz**

Intel Core i5 2500K @ 4.5Ghz
Gigabyte Z68AP-D3 Motherboard
Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit
4GB DDR3 RAM
ATI Radeon HD 6870 1GB
60GB S-ATAIII SSD + 500GB S-ATAIII
Zalman Z9 Case + Xigmatek PSU

£675
inc. VAT

**Evolution 2600K OC @ 5Ghz**

Intel Core i7 2600K @ 5Ghz
Gigabyte Z68X-UD5 Motherboard
Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit
16GB DDR3 Corsair 1600Mhz RAM
NVIDIA GeForce GTX 590 3GB
60GB S-ATAIII SSD + 1TB Caviar Black
Corsair 600T + Corsair 850W HX

£1,799
inc. VAT

Watercooled!

BATMAN
ARKHAM CITY

FREE Batman Arkham City Game
Use Discount Code DSCFRTN

Powered By
GIGABYTE™
Leader in Motherboard Innovation

www.WorldMags.net

WWW.OTHERKINALLIANCE.ORG

# The Otherkin

What happens if, one day, it starts to dawn on you that rather than being a humdrum human being you are, in fact, an elf, or a unicorn, or even a chupacabra? **EMMA McNEIL** shines a light on the incredibly strange creatures who stopped being people and became mixed-up monsters...

It's hard not to notice the continued and growing presence of fantastical creatures in popular culture. But among the subscribers to *FAE* magazine, *Twilight* fans, festival-goers in elegant fairy dresses and ever-present Tolkien readers, there are some people for whom the idea of non-human entities has a deeper resonance: they are called the Otherkin.

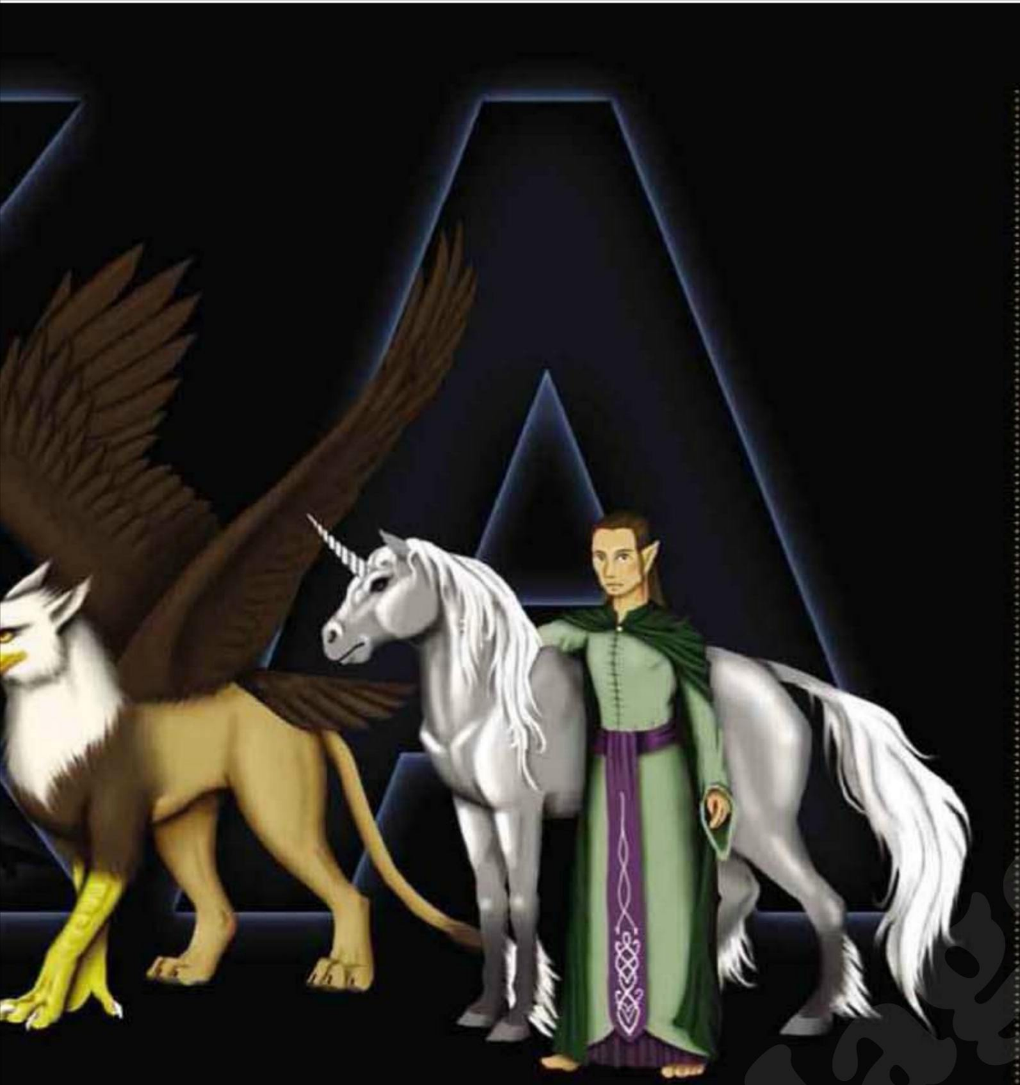
There are many different types of Otherkin. There are dragons, elves *(FT236:40–42)*, unicorns, werewolves (or 'therians' as most prefer), and *kitsune* (Japanese fox spirits; see *FT214:30–37*). Many modern vampires also consider themselves Otherkin, as do a number of incarnated demons.[1] And if you feel a little unsettled by the notion of incarnated demons, don't worry – there are plenty of incarnated angels, too, as recently popularised by Angel guru Doreen Virtue.[2] Some even identify with cryptozoological creatures like Nessie or the chupacabra.[3] And there are those who are entirely unique, who identify as a species unfamiliar from any folkloric or fantasy tradition.

Their shared belief is that people can be non-human

These people consider themselves to be Otherkin and many embrace the rich and expanding Otherkin subculture found through online forums, social networking and, increasingly, in real-life meetings such as the annual "Walking the Thresholds" gathering.[4]

With such a diverse range of creatures describing themselves as Otherkin, it's hard to find a single definition that meets everyone's approval. Some definitions, for example, focus on the nature of Otherkin interactions rather than the individual's sense of identity. In her doctoral thesis, Danielle Kirby focuses on the fact that the Otherkin subculture has so far had a largely online presence: "The Otherkin are a loosely affiliated group of likeminded individuals who have formed a virtual online community. Their shared belief is that some people are, either partially or completely, non-human."[5]

This definition largely excludes the offline experience of Otherkin. It is



true that much of the interaction between Otherkin currently occurs online. But the same is true of many support groups for, say, people suffering from chronic illnesses. Also, the fear of ridicule (sometimes dubbed, only half-jokingly, "fursecution") means that many Otherkin feel more comfortable talking anonymously and virtually about their beliefs and experiences than face to face. Luna, a writer who herself identifies as Otherkin (as a therian) has offered this definition that focuses instead on personal experiences. She defines an Otherkin as: "a person who believes that, through either a non-physical or (much more rarely) physical means, s/he is not entirely human. This means that anyone who relates internally to a non-human species either through soul, mind, body, or energetic resonance, or who believes s/he hosts such a being in hir body/mind, is in my own definition of Otherkin." [6]

## The Awakening

Non-Otherkin are often quick to assume that this is purely an online phenomenon – most likely a bit of viral marketing for a new *White Wolf* game or teen fantasy drama. But for Otherkin, discovering their 'true' identity and integrating it into their everyday lives is an important and often life-changing event. Most Otherkin describe the realisation that they do not regard themselves as entirely human as their "Awakening". The Otherkin.net wiki describes the process as follows: "In Otherkin Awakening, an individual re-evaluates their life in new and sometimes scary ways. They realise that, for some reason, they no longer feel – or never felt – completely human. Some may feel a new level of consciousness developing, with new thought patterns, new belief structures or new memories. To some, this awakening to a new life is a quick and complete event. Almost overnight, they 'know' who or what they truly are. For others, and possibly this is the majority, the awakening process is a long process that may take years to complete." [7]

Awakening may be accompanied by feelings of sadness, depression or anxiety. The realisation that you may not be who you thought you were, and that the nature of the Universe might be entirely different from what you had previously understood, can be distressing, especially for those raised with conventional religious beliefs. Much of the help and advice offered within Otherkin communities is geared towards getting people through this period of self-discovery and the inevitable self-doubt that accompanies it. But Otherkin groups don't just offer help and support to new members; like all communities and subcultures, they have their own cultural mores and conventions, factions and divisions.

Otherkin are not immune to bigotry and belligerence. There can be stereotyping of particular species or a suspicion of Otherkin who buck the consensus view about their species. A newly awakened elf may find that his impression of his own elf self differs from that of other elves, or that some Otherkin may even refuse to acknowledge the existence of his particular species.

There's also a persistent irritation in the community over the 'wannabes'. They are accused of merely play-acting at being Otherkin, swept up in the romance and drama of being different. There's an obvious dilemma here: who can really say that his or her experience of feeling non-human is more valid than someone else's? Some Otherkin also despair over the number of people (as in the past-lives community) who claim to have been royalty or priests in their 'other' life; a condition dubbed "Elven Princess Syndrome". [8]

One type of Otherkin is particularly controversial: the otakukin. Otakukin believe their souls are not from the pool of familiar folklore. Instead, they believe they are the incarnations of characters from popular culture – typically, but not always, characters from Japanese anime. Even the most liberal, open-minded, and accepting Otherkin have been known to find their patience wearing thin when faced with this most marginalised of kin-types, which many argue should not be counted as Otherkin at all.

In general, the Otherkin community is noticeably inclusive compared to many other groups. Identifying as Otherkin often leads to a person developing an interest in esoterica, frequently including an adoption of neopagan beliefs and a more general spiritual awakening. The 'new' identities Otherkin develop often draw them towards ecological and global consciousness issues.

Within the community, Otherkin share stories of their pasts and origins. Interestingly, these stories can be remarkably consistent. One group of elves, known as the Elenari, have even gathered together recollections of their shared history and culture. [9]

Throughout the community and among interested observers one obvious question recurs: why do Otherkin believe that their souls are not human?

Is it as strange an idea as it seems? After all, there are a number of situations in which people believe that their true self is in some way different from what it appears to be. Some people describe themselves as transgendered and identify with a different gender. There are people who believe that the usual number of limbs assigned to humans is too many for their liking; these sufferers from Body Integrity Identity Disorder (BIID) sometimes choose to have their "extra" limbs medically removed. [10] There are historical parallels as well, in which members of various cultures identified with animals, despite their apparent human form: the Viking berserkers, the Central Mexican *nahuales*, the Neuri of Central Europe, and the Banyang of Cameroon. And the Japanese Royal Family are traditionally said to have dragons in their ancestral line. But, since the first Elven communities began developing online from the early 1990s , Otherkin have been remarkably consistent and clear in their belief that they are non-humans in human bodies in a way that differs from these examples.

## Why be Other?

The flippant and facetious explanation as to why someone might begin to identify as a mythic creature is that they are suffering from "too much Tolkien" syndrome. To their critics, these people are merely engaged in a personal role-playing scenario that draws on popular fantasy fiction and its cultural antecedents. After immersing themselves in fantasy and mythic universes populated by beautiful, intriguing mythical creatures, such individuals (especially if they suffer from a degree of insecurity) want to identify personally with an attractive supernatural entity.

After "too much fantasy fiction", the second most common explanation among Otherkin doubters is that believing oneself to be a non-human is clearly a sign of madness, of dissociation from the real world. Many Otherkin will admit that they themselves have doubted their own sanity and that the fear of being labelled insane has prevented them from "coming out" to the wider community.

SAKURA - MICHIRU UMI WWW.OTHERKIN.NET

But this explanation – apart from casually diagnosing many functioning adults with serious mental illness – doesn't seem to fit the Otherkin phenomenon. Firstly, spiritual beliefs (and many Otherkin would argue that being Otherkin is essentially a spiritual belief) are frequently excluded from diagnoses of mental illness. For example, belief in a connection to a divine being and the power of prayer are not usually considered symptoms of mental illness unless accompanied by other signs and symptoms that suggest the patient's mind has broken away from reality or impair participation in everyday life. The majority of Otherkin are not suffering from any significant impairment that prevents them from living a generally normal existence in the wider community.

But being Otherkin and suffering from a mental illness are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The process of Awakening is said by many Otherkin to be stressful or traumatic and may at least mimic mental illness. This is hardly surprising; the realisation that you believe yourself to be non-human is likely to be unsettling at the very least, and many Otherkin report feelings of anxiety, depression and paranoia during their Awakening. And if the standard quoted statistic that one in six people will suffer from mental illness at some point in their life [11] is remotely accurate, it would be even more extraordinary if there were no mental illness within the Otherkin community.

In fact, within the Otherkin movement there are a number of people who have been diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) – the condition previously known as Multiple Personality Disorder. Among their 'alters' they have one or more non-human personalities.

Many of those Otherkin who identify as having multiple personalities also believe in the concept of "healthy multiplicity". They believe that being a multiple is not necessarily an unnatural state of mental ill health brought on by childhood trauma. Instead, they believe that through various means – that can include natural processes, the actions of walk-ins or reincarnation – some physical bodies are inhabited by a number of different personalities, not all of which are necessarily human.

According to *The Layman's Guide*, [12] an Internet resource for introducing people to the concept of healthy multiplicity: "Multiplicity is a state in which many people share one physical body. Being multiple means that one exists as part of a group of people, with all the benefits and drawbacks and chances for talents or interesting natures that any other group of people would have. It is not automatically a disorder, and it is not automatically something which must be changed in order to promote mental or physical health. It is not automatic godhood, proof of genius status, or even proof of severe sexual trauma."

Psychological explanations haven't just been used to explain the Otherkin phenomenon in terms of psychosis. There is an argument that Otherkin are using their awakened identities in a healthy way as totems, Jungian-style archetypes, or 'fictives' that help them better understand themselves and their place in the world. For example, believing yourself to be a fairy could be a way of expressing and justifying an overall sensitivity and love for the environment that you feel puts you in conflict with wider society.

In the community itself, the most popular explanations centre around the reality of two phenomena: the walk-in and reincarnation. The walk-in phenomenon describes a situation in which a soul or spirit enters a body previously inhabited by another soul, usually following some traumatic experience such as an illness or suicide attempt. Reincarnation, the belief that a person's soul is reborn in a number of different physical bodies over time, is common to a number of religious traditions and has regained popularity within the New Age movement.

The reasons given as to why non-human souls choose to incarnate through these means vary. The Otherkin self may be incarnating as human as part of its spiritual development. Some believe they have been forced to incarnate as human, perhaps as a punishment or following some catastrophe. Others believe that their human incarnation is for the benefit of humankind and the planet.

But there is a clear logistical problem. It's an even bigger stretch to believe that someone has reincarnated from a past life as an elf than it is to believe someone remembers their previous life as a farmer during the Great Depression. We know America existed in the Thirties, and we know there were farmers. There's no evidence that elves and unicorns ever existed. To get over this problem, many Otherkin cite the possibility of parallel worlds and multiple universes, as in Robert A Heinlein's 'World as Myth' novels, where fictional and folkloric worlds exist in an infinite number. [13]

It remains to be seen how far into the wider public consciousness the Otherkin phenomenon will move and how many more people will awaken and realise who they really are. But for all the fascinating claims, and for all the talk of multiple universes, elven incarnations and recovered memories of otherworldly lives, for most Otherkin their non-human status is simply another facet of their ordinary lives. FT

### NOTES

**1** http://bit.ly/rsMwPP (kahoku.otherkinphenomena.org).

**2** Doreen Virtue: *Earth Angels: A Pocket Guide for Incarnated Angels, Elementals, Starpeople, Walk-Ins, and Wizards*, Hay House, 2002.

**3** Lupa: *A Field Guide to Otherkin*, Megalithica Books, Stafford, 2007, p207.

**4** "Walking the Thresholds", http://bit.ly/vG6TKD (rialian.com).

**5** Danielle Kirby: *Fantasy and Belief: fiction and media as conjunct locales for metaphysical questing and spiritual understanding* (PhD Thesis, School of History, Philosophy, Religion & Classics, University of Queensland, 2009).

**6** Lupa, *op cit*, p26.

**7** http://bit.ly/smyn52 (otherkin.net).

**8** http://bit.ly/vSQmkI (main.otherkinalliance.org).

**9** http://elenari.net/.

**10** http://bit.ly/jsclTv (gla.ac.uk).

**11** Office for National Statistics 2000, "Psychiatric morbidity among adults living in private households in Great Britain".

**12** http://bit.ly/feK2mO (karitas.net).

**13** http://otakukin.atspace.com/.

### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**EMMA McNEIL** is a freelance journalist who has written extensively about strange phenomena and health issues. Although she isn't Otherkin (at least not that she knows) she's continuing her research into Otherkin and associated phenomena and can be contacted via www.emmamcneil.co.uk.

# Christmas gift subscriptions for just £29.99

A subscription to Fortean Times is the perfect gift for anyone with a sense of adventure, curiosity, natural scepticism and a good sense of humour.

**9 issues £29.99 – SAVE 21%**

**Give a gift subscription for just £29.99 and your lucky recipient will receive:**

- **9 issues of Fortean Times (worth £38.25 in the shops)**
- Hot-off-the-press magazines
- FREE delivery direct to their door
- Information on the most fantastic phenomena on earth

Merry Christmas

*Receive a free card to personalise and send to your recipient**

**Even more titles are available at: www.magazinedeals.co.uk/xmas**

## GIFT SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

☐ **YES!** I want to give someone a gift they REALLY want this Christmas.
**Fortean Times £29.99 – 9 issues (SAVE 21%)**

**YOUR DETAILS** **Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS**

MR/MRS/MS FORENAME
SURNAME
ADDRESS

POSTCODE
DAYTIME PHONE YEAR OF BIRTH
MOBILE PHONE
EMAIL

**Gift recipient details**

MR/MRS/MS FORENAME
SURNAME
ADDRESS

POSTCODE
DAYTIME PHONE
EMAIL

*To receive your free greetings card in time for Christmas, gift orders must be received by the 9th December 2011. This offer closes on the 31st December 2011. All gift subscriptions will start with the January 2012 issue.

**CHEQUE OR CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PAYMENT**

☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd. for £29.99
☐ Please charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX
☐ Debit/Maestro (Issue No. ☐ )

CARD NO. START DATE EXPIRY DATE

SIGNED TODAY'S DATE

*3 EASY WAYS TO PAY*

**1 ORDER ONLINE AT**
**www.dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes**
**USING OFFER CODE P1112XFTX**

**2 CALL 0844 844 0053**

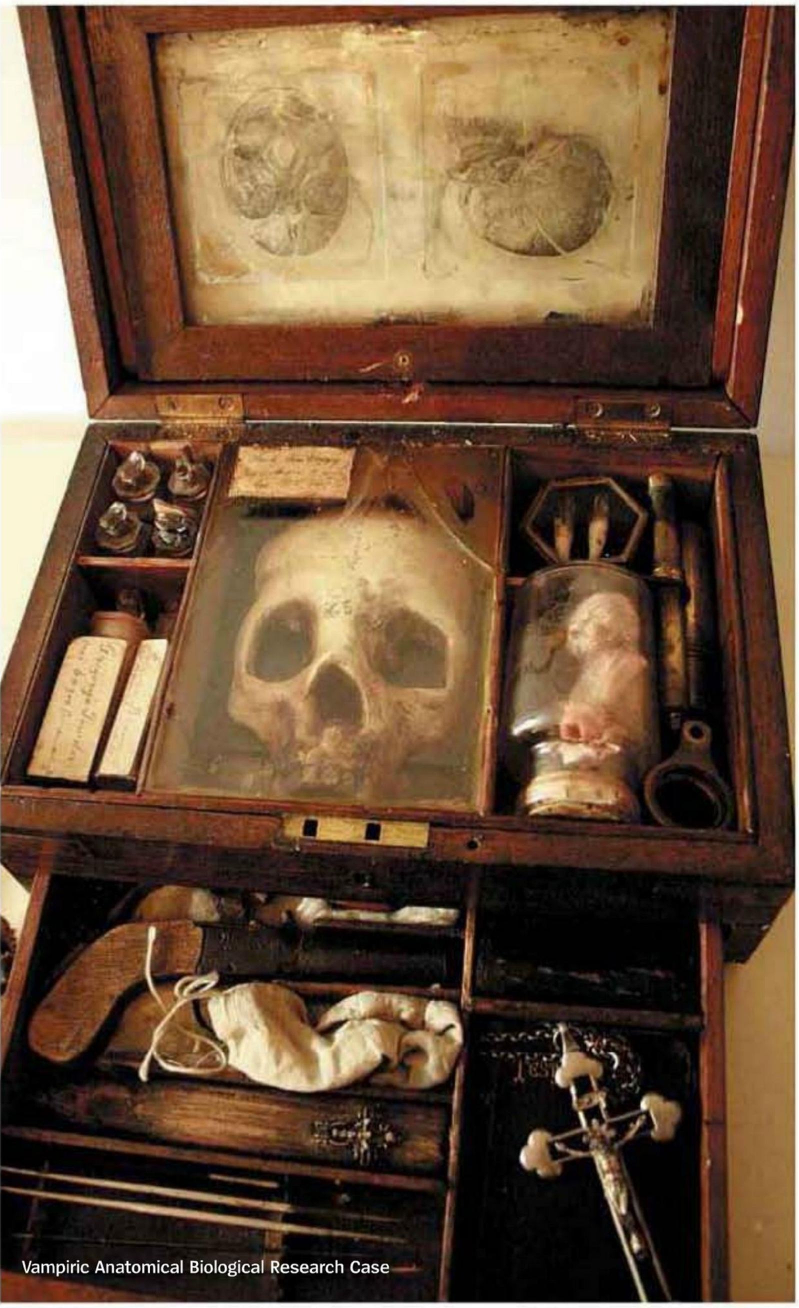
**3 COMPLETE THE ORDER FORM AND RETURN IT TO:**
**FREEPOST RLZS-ETGT-BCZR, Fortean Times Christmas Offer,**
**800 Guillat Ave, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne ME9 8GU**
(This address can also be used on an envelope – no stamp required)

**Dennis Publishing (UK) Ltd** uses a layered Privacy Notice, giving you brief details about how we would like to use your personal information. For full details please visit our website **www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/** or call us on **0844 844 0053**. If you have any questions please ask as submitting your details indicates your consent, until you choose otherwise, that we and our partners may contact you about products and services that will be of relevance to you via, direct mail, phone, e-mail and SMS. You can opt-out at ANY time via **www.subsinfo.co.uk** or **privacy@dennis.co.uk** or **0844 844 0053.**

OFFER CODE
P1112XFTX

# THE SPECIMENS OF ALEX C.F.

**TIM WEINBERG VISITS AN UNUSUAL COLLECTION DEVOTED TO THE STUDY AND DOCUMENTATION OF UNCLASSIFIED NON-HUMAN SPECIES… AND MEETS ITS EVEN MORE UNUSUAL CURATOR.**



Vampiric Anatomical Biological Research Case

ALL PIX: WWW.ALEXCF.COM

*"There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust."* – Edgar Allan Poe, *The Masque of the Red Death*

Somewhere in London – and I cannot (nay, *dare not*) be more specific – resides a collection of animal specimens so fabulous that it may well necessitate a thorough reclassification of the natural world.

The ramifications of the collection would include a (possible) past in which werewolves, vampires and dragons co-existed with humans, and historical figures as diverse as Dante and Rasputin were involved in strange experiments in longevity and visions of other worlds.

Somewhere, then, under London's heavy skies is to be found a less than salubrious old house, full of ghosts and secrets. It is here that Alex CF curates and guards his collection with a zealous intensity. He, whose lair I was about to enter, had embraced madness willingly. Now, I was to share in it.

After my tentative rap on an anonymous front door, a face appeared. Having satisfied himself that we were not being spied upon, my host led me into a curiously old-fashioned parlour, where hot tea was already set out for us.

Brief pleasantries were exchanged and without much further ado, we started to speak in low tones.

### DRACO ALATUS (THE DRAGON)

"The Merrylin Cryptid Collection added the head of a juvenile male draco, and the bodies of several stillborn infants, in 1876, after making contact with a remote group of Buddhist monks living in Gurkha Himal, Nepal. They were entirely cut off from civilisation and practised a form of Buddhism known as *agni* (Sanskrit for 'fire'). To the surprise of the explorers, the monks revealed a large flock of *Draco alatus* living on the south side of a mountain range. Dressed in coloured fabrics and bridles, the dragons seemed almost domesticated. They were fed on flocks of cattle in the lower plains, seemingly deified by the monks. A young male had died earlier that year from a birth defect, and along with various stillborns, was buried near the monastery.

"To the horror of the monks, the explorers dug up and stole the head of the animal and the stillborn for their Western benefactor. On receiving this piece, Merrylin himself returned to the monastery later that year to see these creatures in the flesh. The entire enclave and flock had vanished, leaving little evidence that they had ever existed. It is presumed that they left to find a more isolated place to continue their worship of these majestic beasts."

"My name, though of little significance, is Alex CF. It's a moniker, perhaps to protect myself from the insidious individuals who may have their greedy eyes on the specimens under my jurisdiction. I am the fortunate, or perhaps, as some would say, unfortunate, curator of the Merrylin Cryptid Collection."

He stressed the word am, as if this was, for him, an especially exquisite torment.

It turned out these were to be the only biographical details forthcoming from my gracious, though strangely reserved, host.

I was wary of disturbing his air of distant melancholy, but the tea was warming my spirits a little and I quizzed him on his acquisition of these specimens.

The speaker sighed and his gaze drifted as he answered.

*"I won't trouble you with the details as to how I became the custodian of the collection, but when this responsibility became my life, a sense of familiarity soon removed any fear or trepidation I might have felt…*

*In 2006, a London townhouse that had been an orphanage during and after the Second World War was sold at auction. During an inspection of the lower floors, a hidden room was discovered, behind a sealed wall, containing 5,000 crates; each crate contained a number – sometimes as many as 20 – of wooden boxes."*

An unconscious expression must have betrayed my reluctance to believe that such vast hordes of immeasurable value to science had remained hidden from view for so long. My interlocutor looked irritated.

*"At that time the crates were still sealed and a team of archæologists was sent in to examine the contents… and yes,"* – he seemed almost to glare at me – *"there were indeed thousands of biological specimens… But these were no ordinary species. Glass jars held the preserved fœtuses of Werewolves (*Homo lupus*) Vampires (*Homo wampyrus*) and other creatures of legend."*

Your humble narrator was by now ready to leave, feeling that he might be the unwitting victim of a practical joke, perhaps arranged by his mysterious masters at Fortean Towers. Alex CF obviously noticed my

Rasputin and the forging of the Misbegotten Trinity

WorldMags.net

irritation and discomfort, but seemingly chose to ignore it. He continued.

*"Perhaps the strangest part of my tale concerns the man responsible for the collection; Thomas Theodore Merrylin. He was an aristocrat and dabbled in fringe zoology. He was born in 1780 and was last seen in 1942 when he donated the building which became the orphanage and would secretly house this collection for nearly 65 years."*

He handed me an old, folded newspaper cutting, dated 1942. It carried a picture of a man, perhaps in his forties, labelled Thomas Merrylin, handing over the documents of ownership to a representative of the *Tunbridge Orphanage for Boys*.

He seemed, once again, to take note of my incredulity.

*"His longevity is indeed a mystery. He seems to have possessed knowledge of advanced quantum physics and obscure discoveries in biology – knowledge that apparently allowed him to cheat death."*

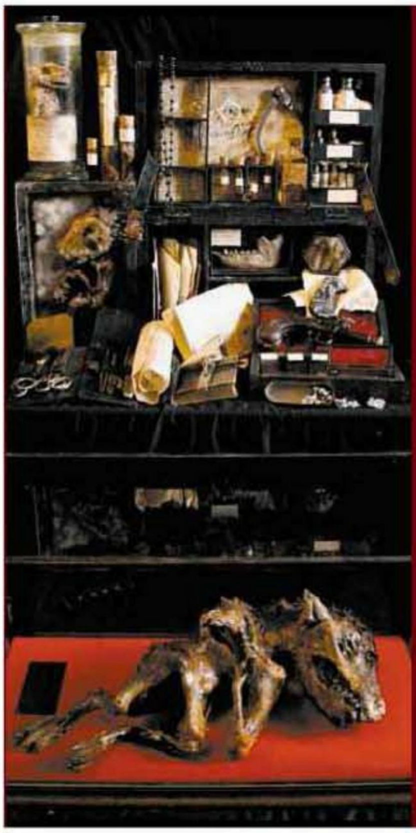
He stopped abruptly, as if he knew more but couldn't or wouldn't divulge it. He rose suddenly to his feet.

*"Would you like to see an infant* Draco alatus*? Yes, yes, a dragon; a real dragon. It's over here on my desk."*

When we returned to our chairs, I'm sure I was visibly shaken. My host seemed lost in thought for a few minutes.

*"Where to begin? Dante – he really did see Hell, you know? I have a series of huge sheets of his disturbing daubings. They were found when an earth tremor disturbed a small mausoleum in Ravenna in 1799 and were identified by an English gentleman, Charles Guilder. His work on the matter has the rare distinction of being labelled both religious and literary heresy."*

At this point, Mr CF seemed almost to smile.

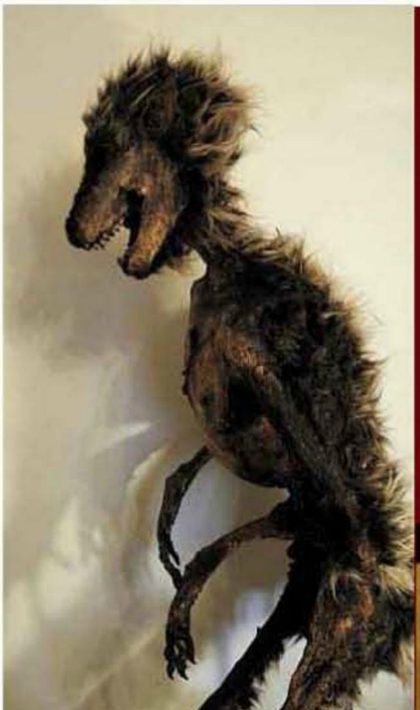


**"THE PRESERVED CADAVER OF A TEN-MONTH-OLD LYCANTHROPE, DISCOVERED BY EDWARD HARRELL, 1836, LIDA."**

"Edward Harrell collected many specimens of Lycanthrope young, most taken from the executed mothers he hunted while studying the migration patterns of nomadic groups through northern Europe. It was only in his later years that he came to regret his murderous thirst for knowledge pertaining to this elusive offshoot of early man. *Homo lupus*, a symbiotic hominid, shares no actual genetic traits with the common wolf, other than those shared by all mammals. They usually give birth to more than one young at a time, the gestation period being around eight months. They are intelligent, problem-solving animals, although their fear of humanity has prevented them from forming larger social groups. This infant was 10 months old, and died from starvation. Edward found the specimen buried in the snow in Lida, Lithuania. One side of the specimen was crushed, although the body is mostly in a good state of preservation. The skin is almost all intact, as are its teeth, and even tiny whiskers on its face. A fine specimen of a werewolf."

*"There were also odd and harrowing writings… and a demon.*

*"Forty years later, Henry O'Malley enters the picture, contacting Guilder, implying that he too has had experience of… how shall I put it? Extra-dimensional realities. He later entered into correspondence with the noted mathematician Charles Dodgson, in pursuit of unpublished theses on the nature of this extra-dimensional mathematics. Dodgson, too, alluded to similar experiences."*



**"ADULT MALE LYCANTHROPE"**

"The prize possession of Edward Harrell, this specimen of a young adult male Lycanthrope was housed in Harrell's home, in the centre of his drawing room. Although how and where he obtained the werewolf were never fully explained, Edward treated it with the utmost respect, and was often found staring longingly at it.

"Merrylin was very fond of Harrell, and from Merrylin's diaries it appears they often travelled together. The Cryptid Collection is still analysing the boxes of diaries pertaining to these adventures, and hopefully more information will arise on the relationship between these two enigmatic figures."

He would speak no further of Dodgson, which was something of a relief to me, as my mind was now fairly reeling, and didn't need further rabbit-holes to fall down or looking-glasses to be pulled through.

I felt faint, but managed to stand, and, although severely distressed, slapped the table hard, incredulity finally turning to anger.

He looked at my hand.

*"Do you know who Rasputin was?"*

I nodded frantically, quite beyond the point of uttering actual words.

*"I have his severed hand if you'd like to see it? He allowed it to be removed before his death for use in experiments concerning longevity and rejuvenation. There's also a tattoo of a star cut from the flesh over his heart…"*

I don't remember exactly how much longer I remained there before emerging from the innocuous doorway. I could only feel relief as my cab sped away through the dingy streets.

One nagging thought refuses to leave my brain; when Alex CF had spoken of this being his lifetime's work, I really should have asked how precisely how long a period that might have been.

I realise now – *I have no idea at all how old the man actually is…* FT

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

KEEP CAL
ND
CA Y O

**TIM WEINBERG** is a regular contributor to FT. His first book, *Phobias: The Way of the Worrier*, is available at www.timweinberg.com.

**ALEX CF** can be contacted via www.alexcf.com

# The Funniest T-Shirts on the net!

At CharGrilled.co.uk you can choose from hundreds of funny and retro designs on a colourful range of t-shirts for just £14.95! All orders are delivered anywhere in the world, FREE.

Surprise yourself or someone else with a t-shirt in a tin can, the ideal gift for the tin can opener owners!

We're always creating hilarious new designs, so keep checking the site to make sure you're always wearing the freshest t-shirts!

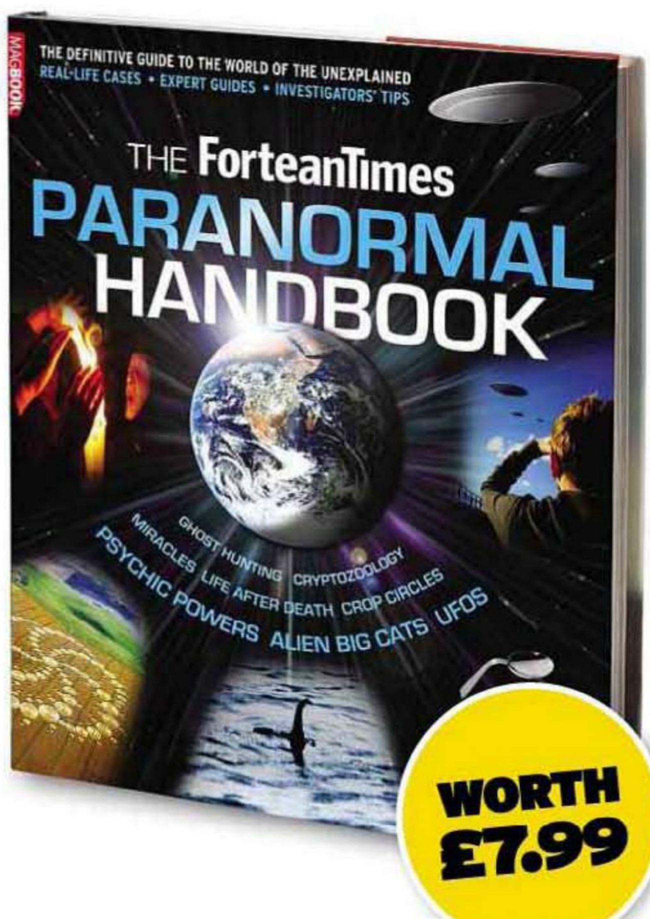
Get 10% off your order by entering V19910 at our checkout.

BUY 3 GET 1 FREE

www. CHARGRILLED® .co.uk

We want your ring 0800 783 5299

feck
irish connection
I LOVE LAMP
TUNA
GAME OVER
WARNING
I'M NOT LISTENING
SHAKE & BAKE!
STOP FOLLOWING ME!
I facebooked your mum
first rule of tea club: never talk about tea club
SEX PANTHER
COLOGNE FOR MEN
60% of the time, it works everytime!
na na na na
na na na na
na na na na
na na na na
BATMAN!


THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF THE UNEXPLAINED
REAL-LIFE CASES • EXPERT GUIDES • INVESTIGATORS' TIPS
MAGBOOK
THE ForteanTimes
PARANORMAL
HANDBOOK
GHOST HUNTING CRYPTOZOOLOGY
MIRACLES LIFE AFTER DEATH CROP CIRCLES
PSYCHIC POWERS ALIEN BIG CATS UFOS
WORTH
£7.99

# FREE
# ForteanTimes
# PARANORMAL HANDBOOK
# WHEN YOU CLAIM 3 TRIAL ISSUES

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES
ForteanTimes
APOCALYPSE
ing the Bard
kespeare please stand up?

## Your Phenomenal Offer:

- **3 trial issues** to start your subscription – if you're not completely satisfied, simply cancel during your trial period and claim a FULL REFUND
- **FREE** Fortean Times Paranormal Handbook.
- **SAVE up to 21%** on the shop price
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops

**Order online:** using offer code below
**www.dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes**

**Order by phone:**
**0844 844 0049**

or complete and return the form below

## ForteanTimes FREE Fortean Times Paranormal Handbook

☐ **YES! Please start my subscription to Fortean Times with 3 trial issues and send me my FREE Fortean Times Paranormal Handbook.** I understand that the first 3 issues of *Fortean Times* I receive are on a no obligation trial basis. If I'm not completely satisfied, I can write to cancel during my trial period and claim a FULL REFUND. The trial issues and FREE Paranormal Handbook are mine to keep, whatever I decide.

OR ☐ I am an existing subscriber. Please extend my subscription with this offer.

**YOUR DETAILS:**

Mr/Mrs/Ms Forename
Surname
Address

Postcode
Telephone
Mobile
Email Year of birth

**CHEQUE & CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: £39.98 FOR 12 ISSUES (SAVE 21%)**

1 ☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd.
2 ☐ Please charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Debit/Maestro (issue no. ☐)

CARD NUMBER START DATE EXPIRY DATE

SIGNED TODAY'S DATE

**DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT: £19.99 every 6 issues (SAVE 21%) – UK ONLY**

Dennis Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit DIRECT Debit

Please complete and send to: Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 800 Guillat Ave, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne ME9 8GU

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society
To the manager: Bank name
Address

Postcode
Account in the name(s) of
Branch sort code
Bank/Building Society account number

Originator's Identification Number

| 7 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Ref no. to be completed by Dennis Publishing

Instructions to your bank or Building Society
Please pay Dennis Publishing Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Dennis Publishing Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)
Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account

**Dennis Publishing (UK) Ltd** uses a layered Privacy Notice, giving you brief details about how we would like to use your personal information. For full details please visit our website **www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/** or call us on **0844 844 0053**. If you have any questions please ask as submitting your details indicates your consent, until you choose otherwise, that we and our partners may contact you about products and services that will be of relevance to you via, direct mail, phone, e-mail and SMS. You can opt-out at ANY time via **www.subsinfo.co.uk** or **privacy@dennis.co.uk** or **0844 844 0053**.

Gifts limited to first 100 orders. Please allow 28 days for delivery. UK only.
This offer is limited to one offer per household

**Return this order to:** Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR,
Fortean Times, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park,
Sittingbourne ME9 8GU (NO STAMP REQUIRED)

OFFER CODE: P1201

**HAVE YOUR SAY**

# forum

## What's with Wetzels?

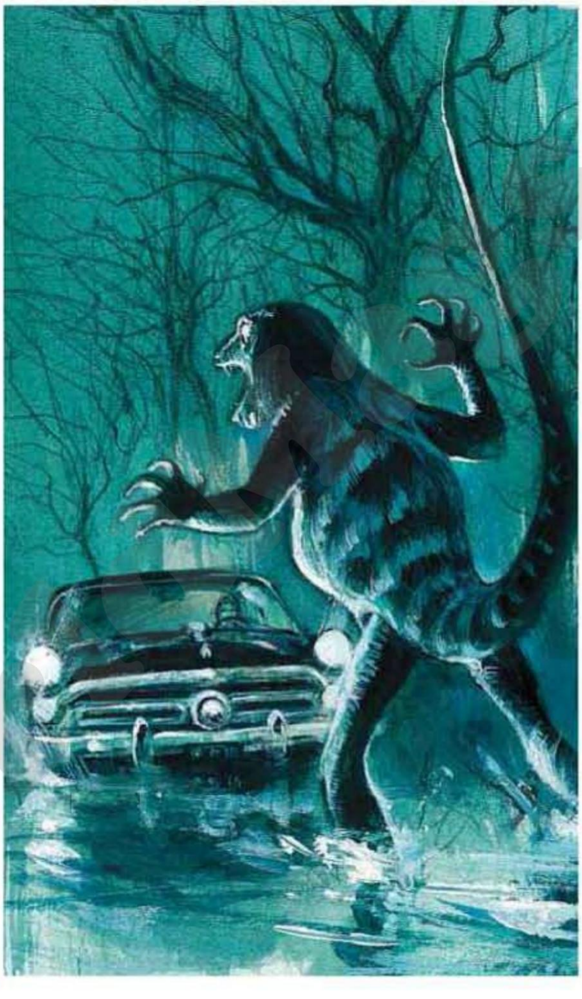
**THEO PAIJMANS** wonders how such an uncommon name can crop up in so many weird creature sightings...

**THEO PAIJMANS** is a regular *FT* columnist and the author of *Kosmisch Netwerk* (1996), *Free Energy Pioneer: John Worrell Keely* (1998) and *The VRIL Society* (2008).

What is it with the Wetzel surname, and why has it become inextricably linked to sudden, unsettling sightings of improbable creatures? After all, as John Keel noted in his 1975 book *The Eighth Tower*, "Wetzel is a rather unusual name (how many Wetzels have you known?)".[1] We already know of two decidedly odd cases – and now a third can be added to this strange list in the fortean name-game canon.

On the night of 8 November 1958, Charles Wetzel was driving his car on Main Street, in Riverside, California. Suddenly a 6ft (1.8m)-tall 'something' appeared out of nowhere and attacked his car. "It wasn't human. It had longer arms than anything I'd ever seen. When it saw me in the car, it reached all the way back to the windshield and began clawing at me. It didn't have any ears. The face was all round. The eyes were shining like something fluorescent, and it had a protuberant mouth. It was scaly. Like leaves."

Wetzel hit the gas and drove his car over the loudly gurgling monster. He later told the police that he thought he had hit the creature and the scratches on his windshield testified that something had happened. However, although the next night another person reported an identical encounter at the same spot and bloodhounds were brought in, the monster had crawled back to whatever otherworldly region it came from and was never seen again.



RENÉ FOLLET

But things were getting weirder with the Wetzel surname. Loren Coleman discovered that *another* Charles Wetzel had had an encounter with the strange the very same year in Nebraska. Coleman, who interviewed his Wetzel in the early 1980s, recounts how Charles Wetzel was at his cabin at Platte River, near Grand Island, Nebraska, on 28 July 1958, when he spotted what he initially thought to be a deer chasing some dogs; but then the strangeness of the animal became obvious as he came within 10 yards of it. He saw what looked like a 6ft (1.8m) tall, brown kangaroo bounding away with 10ft (3m) leaps. As Wetzel tried to get closer, the creature disappeared into an alfalfa field.[2]

And the Wetzel 'name- game' didn't stop here. Recently, I found that yet another Wetzel had been involved in a strange creature sighting, this one going back to 1895, also on a day in July. The location this time was Maryland, near West Falls. At noon on a Saturday that month, Lycurgus Wetzel, son of Levi Wetzel, was returning from the fields when he saw something long lying on the fence just above the springhouse (a small structure once used for keeping food cool in rural areas). Upon closer investigation, he found the thing to be a monster snake. "Its length was within a few feet of being as long as three fence rails. It had large, coarse scales over its body and along the top of his back was a row of hornlike or excrescent parts. Its head was fully a foot and a half [45cm] wide and flat and its eyes very much resembled the eyes of a horse. Its body is said to have been fully nine inches [23cm] in diameter."[3]

Wetzel decided to go home and bring others to look at the snake-monster, as well as getting his shotgun to kill it, but it fell off the fence with a thud and disappeared in the direction of Bald Hill, "and as it passed between two rails in the fence, the horns on its back cut away a portion of the upper rail. The reptile made a path as it went along at an extremely rapid gait, its manner of movement being on the order of a common worm, part of its back being curved upward fully three feet as it moved along... Dogs were put on the track but failed to come across the monster."[4]

As in the Riverside case, the monster was allegedly seen by at least one other: "It is reported that the big reptile seen by Lycurgus Wetzel, of West Falls, near Liberty, was seen by Grafton Thomas, a well-known coloured man from near there, who was hauling wood from Bald Hill, and described it as a monster. There is talk of forming a party to hunt the reptile."[5] Reporting stopped after this short account, and as in the other two Wetzel sighting cases, we hear no more of the snake-monster. It too, had probably slithered back to whatever weird place these creatures come from. FT

**Editor's note:** For yet another Wetzel, connected with a cloud-seeding mystery in Maryland in 1988, see Michael T Shoemaker: "The Third Wetzel", INFO Journal #57, July 1989; **FT64:65**.

### NOTES

[1] John Keel: *The Eighth Tower*, Dutton, 1975, pp94–95.

[2] Loren Coleman: *Mysterious America: the revised edition*, Paraview Press, 2001, p166; pp280–282. See also **FT39:44–46**.

[3] "Was It A Jabberwock?", *News*, Frederick, Maryland, 26 July 1895.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] "The Big Snake Again", *News*, Frederick, Maryland, 2 Aug 1895.

# The Riverside reptilians...

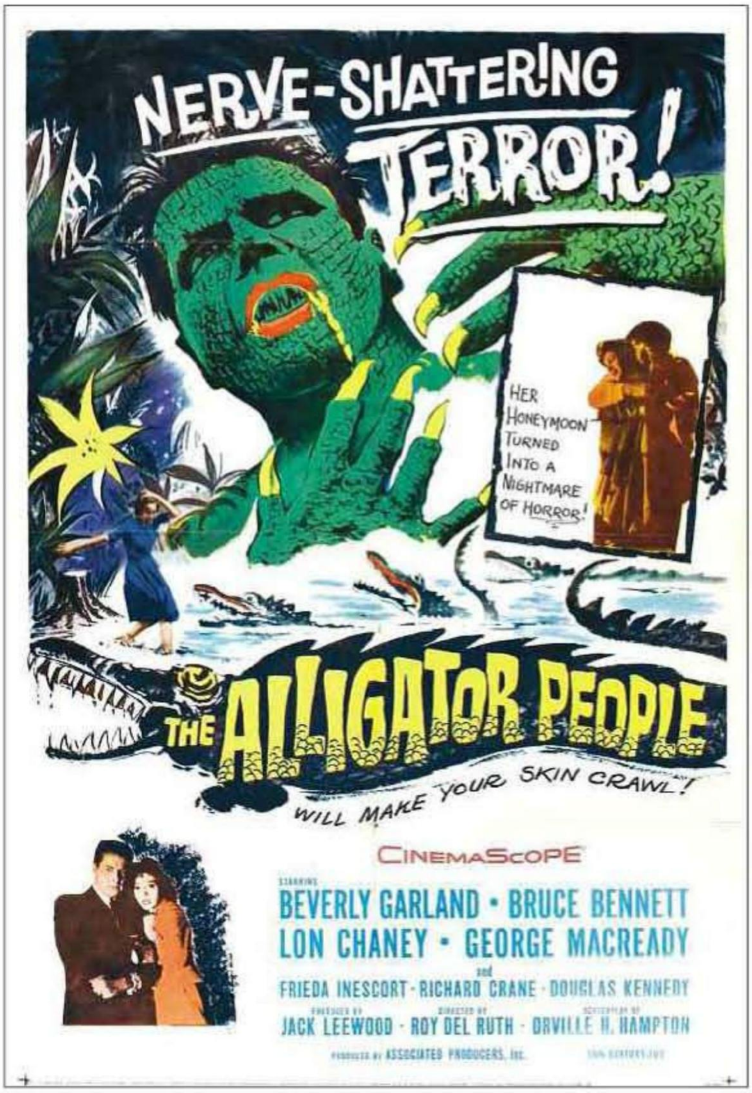
**MARTYN P JACKSON** suggests a possible identity for the bizarre creature that terrified Charlie Wetzel as he drove through Riverside, California, one night in 1958.

**MARTYN P JACKSON** is based in Northumberland. He's a regular *FT* clipster and occasional freelance journalist who has written about cricket and rock music for various magazines. This is his first piece for *Fortean Times.*

I read with interest Greg May's suggestion that Charlie Wetzel's supposed confrontation with a bipedal reptilian/reptoid may have been a publicity stunt for a 1950s science fiction movie [**FT275:68**], given that the alleged cryptozoological encounter took place in Riverside, California – a city where, since the 1930s, Hollywood movies were previewed at the city's Fox Theater (famous as the first cinema to preview *Gone With the Wind* in 1939).

It's certainly true that exploitation film-makers of the Fifties weren't shy of using publicity stunts to promote their movies. The most famous stunt-meister of the era was schlock film-maker William Castle, who to promote his 1958 film *Macabre* presented customers with a $1,000 life insurance policy underwritten by Lloyds of London in case they died of fright while watching the film. At selected screenings, Castle also posted actresses posing as nurses in the cinema lobbies and had hearses parked outside.

Greg's letter sent me scurrying to consult Bill Warren's *Keep Watching the Skies! American Science Fiction Movies of the Fifties* (1997) to see if I could pin down a likely candidate for the film in question. At first glance, the most obvious contender is *The Alligator People*, a 'creature feature' in which Boyd Stockman stomps around in an alligator suit menacing Beverly Garland. However, there are a couple of problems with this theory: firstly, the film was released on 16 July 1958, while Wetzel's sighting took place on 8 November that year; secondly, the head of the rubber alligator suit is distinctly alligator-shaped, whereas Wetzel described the reptilian he encountered as having a "round scarecrowish head, like something out of Hallowe'en," adding: "It wasn't human. It had longer arms than anything I'd ever seen."


NERVE-SHATTERING TERROR!
HER HONEYMOON TURNED INTO A NIGHTMARE OF HORROR!
THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE
WILL MAKE YOUR SKIN CRAWL!
CINEMASCOPE
STARRING
BEVERLY GARLAND • BRUCE BENNETT
LON CHANEY • GEORGE MACREADY
and
FRIEDA INESCORT - RICHARD CRANE - DOUGLAS KENNEDY
JACK LEEWOOD - ROY DEL RUTH - ORVILLE H. HAMPTON
ASSOCIATED PRODUCERS, Inc.

**ABOVE:** A poster for *The Alligator People*.

Wetzel's description brings to mind another cinematic monster from the same period: the titular monster from *I Married A Monster From Outer Space*. Charles Gemora's crude but imaginative costume for the aliens in this sci-fi/horror thriller certainly looks scaly, has long arms and a much rounder head than the creatures in *The Alligator People*. However, the film was released on 29 September 1958, well over a month before Wetzel's alleged encounter.

There are other problems with the publicity stunt theory. For the stunt to be effective, it must have been intrinsically linked in the public's imagination with the specific film it was designed to promote, as was the case with William Castle's life insurance stunt for *Macabre*. I have been unable to find any evidence of such a direct publicity stunt link between any film of the period and Wetzel's sighting. I do, however, believe there still may be a link between the Wetzel case and films of the period, but of a less direct form.

In *Abducted: How People Come to Believe They Were Kidnapped by Aliens* (2005), Harvard psychologist Susan A Clancy notes that alien abduction reports did not begin until after "they were featured on TV and in the movies". In particular, she maintains that the first abduction report, that of Betty and Barney Hill, bears a striking resemblance to the plot of an episode of *The Outer Limits*, right down to the physical description of the extraterrestrials, as well as the plot of the movie *Invaders From Mars*, both of which Betty Hill had seen.

It's possible that the Wetzel case is another example of memory distortion involving the reproduction of established and available 'cultural scripts'. I believe the cultural script Wetzel was reproducing was embedded in the popular memory much earlier than his encounter. Indeed, it had been embedded in US popular culture since

1954, four years prior to the Wetzel incident, the year when the movie *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* was released. This was directed by Jack Arnold for Universal, a studio that at the time of *Creature*'s release had tautologically re-branded itself as Universal International. The film is memorable for the Creature itself, who quickly earned the nickname 'Gill-Man', and went on to be perhaps the most famous film monster of the Fifties and one of most iconic ever created. It was the sole monster of the period that truly ranks with Universal's famous monsters from an earlier era – Frankenstein, Dracula, the Mummy and the Wolf Man. Gill-Man's memorable suit was designed and produced by a large team of artisans, including Disney animator Millicent Patrick, though it is generally credited to Bud Westmore alone.

**ABOVE:** The 'Gill-Man' looms over Julia (Julie) Adams in *The Creature From The Black Lagoon*.

It is also significant that the film was shot and shown in Polaroid black and white 3D rather than the inferior red/green anaglyph 3D process, and as such made a significant impact on its audience. Indeed *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* became so quickly imbedded in popular culture that it was prominently referenced in a scene from the Marilyn Monroe comedy *The Seven Year Itch* later that same year.

**Universal's new creature quickly earned the nickname of 'Gill-Man'**

*The Creature from the Black Lagoon* also spawned two sequels: *Revenge Of The Creature* (1955) and *The Creature Walks Among Us* (1956), which, though inferior, further cemented Gill-Man in popular culture. By the final film, Gill-Man's design had altered, making his head more "round and scarecrowish".

It should also be noted that Charles Wetzel said the creature he encountered exhibited vocal ability – many reptiles don't – and "screeched"; in the original film, Chewbacca-esque growls/roars emanate from Gill-Man.

The Wetzel event happened at night when he was driving home and took place two years after the final cinematic outing of Gill-Man. The supposed reptilian encounter occurred at a point on Riverside's North Main Street where it crossed the Santa Ana River. The river was overflowing the low point in the road, causing Wetzel to slow down. It was here that he believes he saw the creature, which clawed his windshield prior to his running over it. Police tests did reveal that something had rubbed against the underside of his car.

Anyone who has seen rivers in flood knows they carry debris with them, frequently tree branches and even entire trees, and Riverside is surrounded by orange groves. Also, anyone who has driven at night will know how disconcerting it can be when a tree branch unexpectedly scrapes against the windscreen. My hypothesis is that Wetzel's creature was actually part of a tree carried onto the road by the overflowing Santa Ana River – remember he said the creature's scales looked "like leaves". Unsurprisingly frightened, he then ran over the tree causing the scrapes on the underside of his car. In seeking to explain this scary event, Wetzel unknowingly channelled the most appropriate culturally available texts – *The Creature from The Black Lagoon* and its sequels.

Readers will be familiar with this sort of intertextuality, whether it's the influence of Arthur Machen's story *The Bowmen* on the Angels Of Mons reports during World War I [**FT68:34–37**, **170:30–38**, **183:48–51**], or, more recently, the influence of HR Giger's design for the alien Sil in the movie *Species* on descriptions of the chupacabra [**FT271:30–35**]

Incidentally, continuing with the subject of bipedal reptilians, I have been unable to find any references to the conspiracy theory about a cabal of bipedal reptilians in human form covertly running the world – of which the most well-known proponent is David Icke – prior to the broadcast in 1983 of the original US mini-series *V*, which is about a group of lizards in human form seeking to take over the world... FT

# The Welsh water-leaper

After long puzzling over a bizarre airborne amphibian from Celtic folklore, **KARL SHUKER** has at last found the likeliest explanation for this impossible-seeming aquatic attacker.

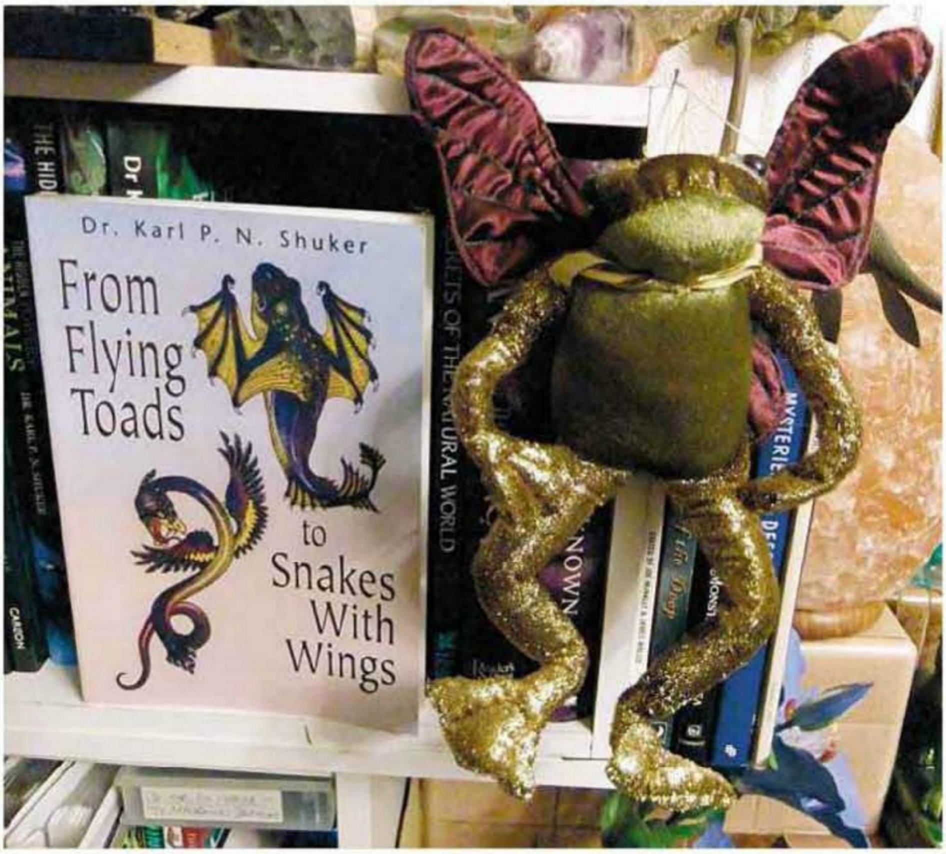
**KARL SHUKER** is a regular *FT* contributor and the author of many books on cryptozoology and other fortean topics. *Karl Shuker's Alien Zoo* was published by CFZ Press in 2010.

At the time of my writing it, as far as I was aware the flying toad referred to in the title of my book *From Flying Toads To Snakes With Wings* (1997) was an obscure creature of vaguely bufonine appearance and aerial ability that featured briefly in Welsh folklore. In more recent times, however, two noteworthy developments have taken place that have added appreciably to its case file. One is the first attempt that I know of to identify this bizarre entity as a real animal; the other is a revelation that strongly suggests it is little more than a modern-day yarn, with no firm basis either in cryptozoology or Welsh mythology. Consequently, it is clearly time to revisit this decidedly odd case.

Here is what I wrote about this exotic creature in my *Flying Toads* book:

"One of the most formidable water monsters documented in John Rhys's exhaustive two-volume opus *Celtic Folk-Lore, Welsh and Manx* (1901) was the terrifying *llamhigyn y dwr* or water-leaper, which inhabited lonely stretches of river in Wales and devoured any hapless sheep or other livestock venturing into its freshwater domain. Its body's shape recalled that of a huge toad, but there the resemblance ended. Despite its name, the water-leaper lacked the toad's muscular, hopping hind legs. Instead, it had a tail – and a large pair of wings!

"Nevertheless, this weird wonder did share one notable characteristic with the toad – a powerful voice, literally a hideous shriek, with which it deliberately frightened so thoroughly any unwary travellers seeking to cross the river that they would lose their footing and fall headlong into it. Once in the river, they would swiftly make a brief (and invariably fatal) acquaintance with its monstrous occupant. Happily, the loathsome *llamhigyn y dwr* does not appear to have been encountered lately."



KARL SHUKER

**ABOVE:** A homecraft version of the (alleged) flying toad of Welsh folklore.

## The leaping toad would devour any straying sheep

Certain later accounts claimed that the water-leaper's tail bore a sting at its tip, but otherwise the above couple of paragraphs contained every detail of note regarding this extraordinary beast, and any stories or legends specifically featuring it were conspicuous by their absence. Not surprisingly, therefore, no attempt had ever been made to identify it as a real-life creature – which is why, on 22 November 2009, I was so intrigued by a short post on the CFZ blog by American cryptozoological researcher Dale Drinnon. "The creature was said to have a face like a toad and to leap out of the water, even though it had no legs," he wrote. "Instead it had large wings. The solution is that the witnesses are describing a sort of freshwater stingray. Stingrays have raised eyes and faces like toads, and they are known to leap out of water to rid themselves of parasites." (http://bit.ly/08rHoO4 / forteanzoology.blogspot.com).

For me, the idea that the water-leaper could actually be an undescribed species of freshwater stingray indigenous to the rivers of Wales is one of those remarkable notions that you just *want* to be true. How wonderful it would be if such an animal could itself really exist – and, in fairness, there is certainly a superficial similarity between the water-leaper's appearance and that of a stingray (though I have yet to learn of one that can shriek, or one that devours sheep, for that matter!). Even so, for a cryptid identity to be plausible, it requires more than just a morphological match. It must also be compatible with the sociology and history of the cryptid's provenance – and such compatibility is sadly lacking in this instance.

In short: if anything as zoologically unanticipated and as morphologically distinctive as a freshwater stingray – especially one that made its presence even more noticeable by leaping up out of its river domain – had ever existed in Wales, the scientific world would surely have known all about it long ago. Added to this is the fact that if a species of freshwater stingray had ever existed in even a single Welsh river, every angler for miles around would have known of it and attempted to catch one and it would have been extensively documented. True, it might well have been fished into extinction long ago, but records confirming its erstwhile existence would have survived, just as they have done for other former British fauna, such as wolves, bears, great auks, great bustards, beavers, and wild boars. Instead, there is nothing whatsoever.

In any case, we also have to consider the zoogeographical enigma posed by the concept of a species of freshwater stingray living in Wales when no such fish or even any close relative of it is present anywhere else in Europe. How could science explain the existence of such a specialised fish in Wales but nowhere else for thousands of miles in any direction?

An entire taxonomic family of freshwater stingrays can be found in the rivers of northern, central, and eastern South America, and species of the genus *Himantura* exist in various southern and southeast Asian rivers, including the Ganges, Mekong, and Chao Phraya. There are also two non-*Himantura* species on record from West Africa, plus a landlocked population of the Atlantic stingray *Dasyatis sabina* in Florida's St Johns River.

Consequently, the possible existence of an unknown species of freshwater stingray in South America or Asia is not an unreasonable prospect, and I might also look benevolently upon a distinctive new species inhabiting some remote river in tropical Africa or perhaps New Guinea, and even upon a marine population landlocked in one of North America's balmier southern coastal regions – but not in Wales, or indeed anywhere else in Britain. And so, albeit with genuine sadness, I must reluctantly conclude that there ain't no such blighter in good old Blighty!

Ironically, however, any serious contemplation of the Welsh water-leaper's putative zoological identity may be wholly surplus to requirements anyway, because there is now good evidence to suggest that far from being a valid creature of Welsh folklore, the fearsome *llamhigyn y dwr* is of more modern, and far more dubious, origin.

Once again, this revelation appeared in a CFZ blog post (at http://bit.ly/nrpAIg), this time by one of its own researchers, Oll Lewis, who has a longstanding interest in Welsh lore and legend. On 6 March 2009, Oll firstly divulged how the famous story of the martyred dog Gelert – who reputedly rescued from a wolf the young son of Prince Llewellyn the Great of Wales, only for the prince to slay the poor hound in the mistaken belief that it had attacked his son – was a complete fabrication, a memorable yarn spun during the late 18th century by the Pritchard family who owned the Goat Hotel in the North Wales town of Beddgelert, in order to entice tourists to visit it. And instead of the town having derived its name from the dog Gelert, as has so often been claimed in Welsh lore, it is now thought to have been named after Kellert (=Celert), an 8th-century Christian missionary, the site of whose grave is there.

Oll then revealed that the only known eyewitness account of the water-leaper ever recorded in print just so happened to have originated from a descendant of the Pritchard family who had invented the Gelert story a century previously, a man named William Jones. He was the direct source for the water-leaper encounter documented by John Rhys in his book of Celtic folklore, which had taken place sometime during the first few decades of the 19th century and featured a local eyewitness called Han Owen.

This is Oll's summary of Owen's encounter with the dreaded water-leaper:

"A local fisherman called Ifan Owen, also known as Han, had had an awful day's fishing. Whenever Han had cast out that day something had nibbled at his bait and removed it cleanly from the hook without getting snagged on it or pulling at the line. Han… grew steadily more annoyed each time his bait was stolen and eventually, when he could take it no more he moved to another spot, beside a small cliff in the valley.

"When Han cast his line out here he felt something pull at his bait almost instantly and, not wanting to lose any more of it, he pulled his rod back much more sharply than usual to be sure of hooking the animal… Having finally hooked his tormentor Han had to pull with all his might to get the creature out of the water. After an epic struggle, the monster erupted out of the water [and] it shot off the hook towards the cliff, so fast that, according to Han: 'It dashed so against the cliff that it blazed like lightning'.

"Han later recounted that if it were not the *llamhigyn* then it must have been the devil himself. Han claimed that both he and his father before him had seen the water leaper on several occasions and in a number of places along this stretch of water, and it was said to scream loudly whenever a fisherman was able to pull it to the surface."

It all sounds highly implausible, but this is hardly surprising, because as Oll went on to disclose, the family who owned the Beddgelert inn "… held regular tall-storytelling nights with relatives and friends from Beddgelert and the nearby parish of Dolwyddelen. Han Owen was regularly in demand for these nights as he had few equals in the area in his ability to spin a yarn and it was at one of these nights that William Jones first heard Han Owen delivering the tales of his encounters with the water leaper. Given the dubious pedigree of the tale, the smart money is on the water leaper having been one of Han's tall tales."

This is not good news for the veracity of the water-leaper as a genuine beast of traditional Welsh folklore – especially as every source of information concerning it that I have consulted can ultimately be traced back to Rhys's Celtic folklore book… whose own source was William Jones and, via him, the clearly unreliable supposed eyewitness Han Owen.

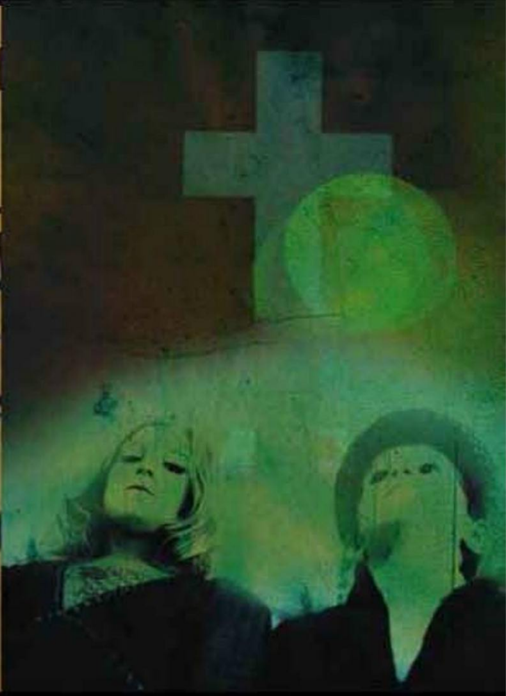
Consequently, I would be extremely interested to learn if anyone knows of any published information regarding the water-leaper whose publication date precedes that of Rhys's book (1901) and whose source is not the Han Owen eyewitness account derived from William Jones. If any do exist, then I may owe the water-leaper an apology for ever doubting its authenticity, but at present the likelihood of a flying toad – even in the rarefied realms of Welsh mythology – seems on par with that of pigs with wings! FT

# More tales of the unexpected...

The faceless figure that stepped out of the fog

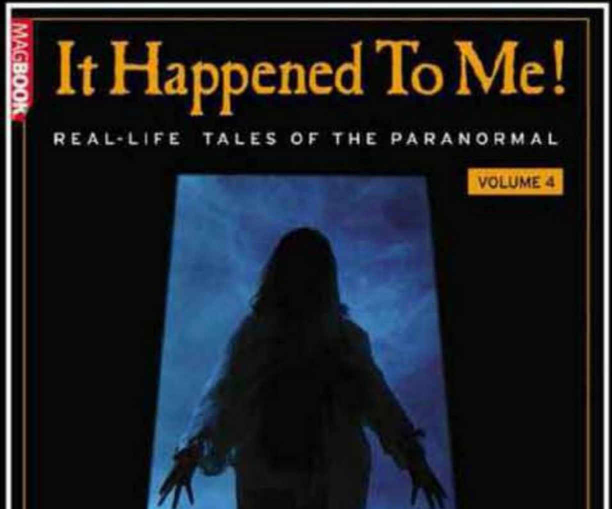
OUIJA
MYSTIFYING ORACLE
GOOD BYE

The ouija session that summoned a shadow man



The ghostly children who played patacake

# All these stories and more in...



MAGBOOK

It Happened To Me!

REAL-LIFE TALES OF THE PARANORMAL

VOLUME 4

Ordinary people's extraordinary true stories from the pages of

ForteanTimes

**IT HAPPENED TO ME** VOLUME 4

## ForteanTimes

presents more true-life encounters with the unexplained

**TO ORDER DIRECT CALL 0844 844 0053**
**OR VISIT MAGBOOKS.COM FOR PRINT AND DIGITAL EDITIONS**
**ALSO AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE FROM**

amazon.co.uk  WHSmith

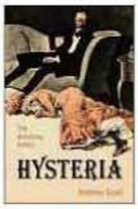
£7.99

**NOW ALSO AVAILABLE ON AMAZON KINDLE STORE**

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF BOOKS TO: REVIEWS EDITOR,
**FORTEAN TIMES**, DENNIS CONSUMER DIVISION,
30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD, UK.

# An old-fashioned disturbance

**Hysteria, as a catch-all term for a range of mental and physical ailments, has gone, leaving aspects of the human experience unacknowledged by medicine**



## Hysteria

**The Disturbing History**

*Andrew Scull*

Oxford University Press
Pb, 223pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £8.99/$17.95, ISBN 9780199692989
**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.99**

Victorian neurologists and psychiatrists treated countless patients – usually middle-class women – who fell into trances, fits and paralyses, and seemed uncontrollably emotionally unstable. Yet doctors could find nothing physically wrong. Today, hysteria can seem as anachronistic as steam engines, codified into 'objective' psychiatric diagnoses and undermined by devastating feminist critiques. Scull examines changing views about this enigmatic disease, and *Hysteria* deserves a place on every fortean bookshelf.

Scull opens with the 17th-century case of 14-year-old Mary Glover. After an argument with a neighbour, Mary started tumbling around with "violence and swiftness", "her head backward to her hippes". Mary felt "colde and stiffe as a frozen thing". Despite protests from a leading doctor, who regarded Mary's illness as a physical ailment, Sir Edmund Anderson, a "notorious… witch-finding judge", found the neighbour guilty of witchcraft and condemned her to a year's imprisonment and "several" turns in the pillory.

Hysteria and neurasthenia may seem archetypal diseases of Victorian women, regarded by some commentators as a psychosomatic emancipation, but healers had recognised the symptoms for millennia. Some Roman physicians believed that the womb wandered around the abdomen, compressing other organs, causing a feeling of choking and even speech loss.

The permissive diagnostic categories of 17th- and 18th-century medicine meant that clinical labels such as 'hysteria' and 'hypochondria' captured then unrecognised neurological diseases, such as some forms of epilepsy, multiple sclerosis and tertiary syphilis. Increasingly, doctors realised hysterical symptoms arose from nerves, an idea popularised by, for example, John Pechey's 1698 *General Treatise of the Diseases of Maids, Big-Bellied Women, Childbed Women and Widows*. Hysterics welcomed the idea that their symptoms arose from a "genuine disorder of the nerves" rather than the imaginary syndrome that many thought an 'attack of vapours' implied.

Today, Scull notes, some chronic fatigue syndrome sufferers object to any hint that their symptoms originate in their mind rather than the body. Many people who suffer the devastating impact of depression still endure suggestions to 'pull themselves together' from people who should know better. *Hysteria* is a medical history, but time and again, Scull's comments, insights and vignettes seemed salient.

Eventually, hysteria became a 'reality' show. The 19th-century neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot made hysteria into a "scandalous circus… that regularly featured scantily clad women" in "unmistakably erotic cataleptic poses" or mimicking orgasms in front of an audience. Charcot's assistants helped manufacture cases behind his back and, probably, without his knowledge. Scull's characterisation of Charcot, a hugely influential figure, is entertaining and insightful.

> **"We cannot reduce human experience or psychiatric disease to neat diagnostic criteria"**

Attitudes shifted again during World War I, as Scull demonstrates in a superlative chapter. The unprecedented slaughter of the 1914–18 conflict forced psychiatrists to decide whether shell-shocked soldiers were mad or malingering. The attitude of some senior officers – give soldiers the choice of "abandoning their 'pretended' illness or being shot" – is well known. But some 'therapeutic' methods seem little better than torture. Doctors on both sides used electrotherapy, applying intense, painful electric shocks to 'paralysed limbs' for several minutes. The physician repeated the 'treatment' hour after hour. One Austrian doctor applied shocks to the patient's mouth and testicles – and forced other traumatised soldiers to watch the treatment they could expect.

Hysteria fell from fashion as psychiatrists increasingly promoted criteria that split mental illness into numerous subcategories. These criteria ensure that clinicians agree on the diagnosis and help design clinical studies. After all, the character of hysteria had changed in line with society's, patients' and physicians' attitudes, making controlled studies and agreed diagnosis difficult. But as Scull notes, these diagnostic criteria do "not necessarily mean that the label… corresponds to a valid distinction in nature". Indeed, the criteria "pathologise virtually any species of human behaviour".

Today, pills have largely replaced psychotherapy as the treatment for disturbances of emotion, cognition and behaviour. While psychotropic agents undoubtedly alleviate much mental suffering, they also have important limitations. But once again, treating hysteria with medicines isn't new: some physicians prescribed arsenic to give "shattered nerves" a "therapeutic jolt". Others used purgatives, diuretics, opiates and even mercury to "restore the mind to its native seat in the brain".

Scull eloquently demonstrates that we cannot reduce human experience, behaviour or psychiatric disease to neurochemical patterns, biological systems or neat diagnostic criteria. I was left with the impression that the term hysteria – for all its negative connotations – articulates an aspect of the human experience that current medical diagnostic criteria don't fully capture. I can't help wondering whether by conscribing hysteria to the pages of medical history, we've thrown the clinical baby out with the nosological bath water.

**Mark Greener**

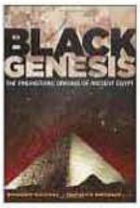
**Fortean Times Verdict**

**AN ACCESSIBLE INTRODUCTION TO AN ENIGMATIC DISEASE** **10**

www.worldmags.net

# Egyptian and African

## It is unsurprising that ancient Egyptians had cultural links with sub-Saharan Africa – after all, they were described as black



### Black Genesis

**The Prehistoric Origins of Ancient Egypt**

*Robert Bauval & Thomas Brophy*

Bear & Company 2011
Pb, 356pp, illus, bib, notes, ind, £16.99/$20.00,
ISBN 9781591431145
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.99

For some reason, the idea that the ancient Egyptians were black is controversial. Despite the fact that historians in the ancient world uniformly described them as black; despite the fact that ancient Egypt was quite plainly an African empire; despite a plethora of evidence, the academic community has fixed on the notion that Egypt was somehow a kingdom of European immigrants – they are our ancestors, so they must be white, mustn't they? I can only assume this arrogant fantasy has endured because the Egyptological community is largely composed of European immigrants into African history.

While I was a student, I came across the work of some African historians, notably Cheikh Anta Diop and Ivan van Sertima, and through them, their Western apologists, such as Martin Bernal, the author of the (in) famous *Black Athena*. This was an initially shocking experience, but eventually a very liberating one; intellectual chains are heavy because they are so thickly encrusted in prejudice, and having them broken is fundamentally therapeutic. Diop in particular became one of my early intellectual heroes.

So when I saw the title of Bauval and Brophy's new book, I was instantly intrigued. It's been 30 years since the furore over Bernal's book, and it often takes a generation before difficult ideas can be re-aired. Moreover, a popular book such as this is more likely to generate momentum than an obscure monograph in an academic journal. Given the post-colonial convulsions currently wracking Africa and the Arab world, maybe this is an idea whose time has come.

And this is an interesting book. The authors have looked at a lot of recent archæology, not just in the vicinity of the Nile itself, but further afield, in the Western Sahara, and beyond. At the very least, the evidence of this research strongly suggests that the ancient Egyptians had cultural ties to sub-Saharan Africa. As presented by Bauval and Brophy, it suggests that precursor cultures can be found in Africa; whether these cultures offer a sufficient originating basis for classical Egyptian civilisation is a question worth asking, if only because the Neolithic period in Africa has been largely ignored by mainstream academics.

Between the end of the last Ice Age and the generally accepted beginnings of Egypt (around 3000 BC) the Sahara went through a series of climatic transformations, from lush green, well-watered land, to semi-arid savannah, to the desert we see today.

There is evidence of human occupation in all those periods, enough to suggest that the population of the area was at times substantial. That evidence includes the kind of astronomically aligned monuments we are conditioned to thinking of as typically European (the fact that such monuments can be found worldwide has not dented the Eurocentric bias). Did the people who fashioned these monuments go on to found the fabulous kingdoms of ancient Egypt?

And did the Egyptians maintain their ties with the original homelands?

It seems they did.

There is literary evidence of expeditions into the Western desert, with the explicit aim of meeting other peoples, peoples whom the Egyptians knew were there, and knew to be their relations in some sense. These expeditions were substantial, and successful, by their own account.

The desert seems to have been no barrier to travelling, without the use of camels (camels were not introduced into Egypt until around 500 BC); indeed, there is evidence of a highway through the Western desert, with watering stations along its length, stretching into what are now Chad and Libya. There are hieroglyphic inscriptions, far from the Nile, recording the visits; these inscriptions do not come across as the claims of explorers, these are the records of people on familiar territory.

I don't think Bauval and Brophy prove their case, compelling as it is. The Atlantic seaboard of Africa is equally rich in archæological evidence; Robert Temple's recent *Egyptian Dawn* catalogues much of this. Ultimately, the roots of ancient Egypt will, I think, be understood as an amalgam of several precursors: those suggested in *Black Genesis*, certainly, and perhaps those offered by Temple; and perhaps also the Badarians, and the Mahdi people, and quite likely people from outside continental Africa. But Africans will be at the heart of it, and *Black Genesis* makes an invaluable, if incomplete, contribution to the argument.

Now maybe it's time for a full reappraisal of Diop and his peers.

**Noel Rooney**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**INVALUABLE ADDITION TO THE OUT-OF-AFRICA ARGUMENT** **7**

### Moa Sightings

*Bruce Spittle*

Paua Press (www.pauapress.com) 2010
Volume 1: Hb, 415pp, ilus, refs, ind, ISBN 9780473153564
Volume 2: Hb, 422pp, illus, refs, ind, ISBN 9780473153571
Volume 3: Hb, 416pp, illus, refs, ind,
ISBN 9780473153588. £101.97 for the 3-volume set.
AVAILABLE FROM THE PUBLISHER

The overused phrase "the standard work" is justified in describing Bruce Spittle's treatise on putative moa sightings.

Giant and not-so-giant moas were flightless birds unique to New Zealand. According to mainstream science, most, if not all, of the 11 species were extinct at least 300 years before Captain Cook landed in 1769. And even if stragglers lingered in remote localities up to or even beyond the European influx, they had still died out long ago – or had they?

Spittle documents every known eyewitness report of possible moa survivals since the 1400s, with a chapter for each of the 151 reports. The format is: the eyewitness, year and location of the alleged sighting; an introduction; a detailed account; and a thorough discussion. Each report has one or more maps, plus illustrations, including many that were new to me. The index is included in all three volumes.

Spittle seems to have consulted everyone involved in, and everything written on, moas. His incisiveness and objectivity are apparent in his surveys of the most famous (and contentious) putative moa sightings. He devotes 98 pages to Alice MacKenzie's 1880 sighting at Martins Bay; Paddy Freaney and two companions' 1993 sighting in Craigieburn Forest Park gets 283 pages (most of Volume 3), with maps and even full-colour reconstructions based upon Freaney's famously fuzzy photo.

Every report is well referenced. The lack of a bibliography is this work's only failing.

In any work as extensive as this, errors are inevitable. Spittle claims, for instance, that his letter to *FT* updating the Freaney case was not published. It appeared in May 1997 (**FT98:54**), and I summarised it in my Alien Zoo column in April 2007(**FT221:16**).

But such slips are insignificant

in one of the finest additions to modern cryptozoological literature.

**Karl Shuker**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**THE STANDARD WORK ON NZ'S FAMOUS FLIGHTLESS BIRDS 9**

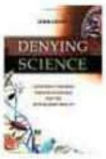
## Denying Science

**Conspiracy Theories, Media Distortions and the War Against Reality**

*John Grant*

Prometheus Books 2011
Hb, 354pp, notes, bib, $25.00/£21.95, ISBN 9781616143992

**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £19.75**



What the Republican presidential candidates seem to have in common is how much science (evolution, climate change and vaccines) they are willing to deny. Denialism is clearly a cultural trend.

Prometheus is the imprint of the sceptical CSI, but Grant indulges in few of the jibes that are the stock-in trade of many sceptical writers and provides, instead, a solid overview of the main areas of science that attract organised denial campaigns. This book is particularly strong on creationism and its offshoots such as intelligent design. Grant looks not just at the people and organisations that promote the denial of evolution, but also at the cultural and scientific trends that have led them to their conclusions, which helps place denial in context and makes it easier to understand the denialists' motives. He takes this technique on to the even more complex terrain of climate change denial, and analyses the streams that feed it, from big oil to media bias. He takes apart the anti-vaccine advocates, self-help gurus and AIDS denialists, and has two particularly interesting chapters on how religion and legal decisions feed the denial process. This is an effective primer for understanding the denialist mindset. And if you conclude "only in America", I have to say: don't be too sure.

**Ian Simmons**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**GOOD INTRODUCTION TO THE DENIALIST MINDSET 8**

# Respectable magic

## The Museum has thrown off a lurid, Wheatley-tinged past to become a sober reflection of wiccan and pagan tradition

## The Museum of Witchcraft – A Magical History

**A Collection of Memories Celebrating 60 Years**

*Ed: Kerrian Godwin*

The Occult Art Company 2011 (theoccultartcompany.co.uk)
Hb, 140pp, £18.50 plus P&P, illus, ISBN 9780956811400

**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.50**

To mark the 60th anniversary of its foundation, the Museum of Witchcraft at Boscastle has produced a striking souvenir book. With a forward by Professor Ronald Hutton, the book provides a history of the museum derived from the writings of some 50 contributors, including many practising wiccans and pagans, past and present.

Founder Cecil Williamson is represented by an article penned in 1966. Williamson originally established the museum on the Isle of Man and relocated it to Boscastle after a stint at Bourton-on-the-Water (where it horrified my grandmother on a visit around 1960).

In the early days, Williamson was happy to sensationalise witchcraft, using elaborate tableaux vivants. Unfortunately, these presentations owed more to Dennis Wheatley novels and historical outrages rather than modern wiccan rituals. But this book does not avoid the influential Williamson period, reproducing selected images of both the controversial displays and the lurid posters promoting them. Effectively, they help illustrate the shift in ethos and emphasis at the museum over the last 15 years, after control passed to Graham King, himself a practising witch.

The museum was expanded into an opened-minded and serious educational venture, housing an archive and a library, backed by members of the pagan movement. This evolution is celebrated by thoughtful and sensitive contributions from contemporary wiccans and neo-pagans about the significance the museum holds for them.

While some aver the previous Chamber of Horrors approach only damaged their image, others take it in their stride, with one writer even admitting he became hooked on witchcraft after seeing Hammer's *The Devil Rides Out* (1967) as a child. But this is an exception, with other witches writing in often personal terms about their first experience of the museum, revealing it as a material inspiration for their beliefs and lifestyles, and even a source of psychic, mystical and spiritual encounters.

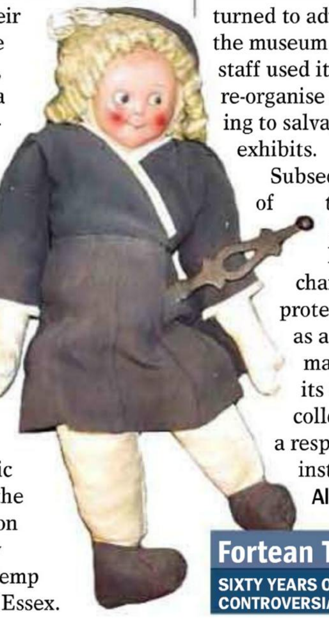


PHOTO: JOHN HOOPER, © THE MUSEUM OF WITCHCRAFT

Some contributors focus on specific items, such as the claimed skeleton of 16th-century witch Ursula Kemp of Chelmsford, Essex. Unfortunately, the bones turned out to be from different individuals (including males) dating back to Roman times.

However, visual thrills may still be found throughout the book, including pictures of some of the more disturbing and controversial artefacts and objects residing in the museum over the years. It is even alleged that some exhibits are the centre of psychic activity and may move by themselves. Similar stories circulated in the 1970s, when it was claimed a thin silken shape of a man which was considered "spiritually alive" reportedly waltzed round the exhibition room.

The book also explains how the impact of the disastrous Boscastle flood in August 2004 was turned to advantage. Although the museum was badly affected, staff used it as an opportunity to re-organise collections, managing to salvage 90 per cent of the exhibits.

Subsequently the Friends of the Boscastle Museum was established as a formal charity, ensuring the protection of the museum as a unique repository of magical objects, with its once controversial collection becoming a respectable heritage institution.

**Alan Murdie**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**SIXTY YEARS OF A ONCE-CONTROVERSIAL COLLECTION 8**

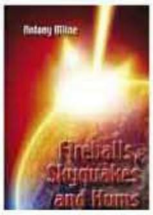
To order any of these titles – or any other book in print – contact the

**FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP**

Telephone: 08430600031 Fax: 01326 569555 Email: FT@sparkledirect.co.uk
Address: Fortean Times Bookshop, PO Box 60, Helston TR13 0TP.
We accept all major credit and debit cards including Switch & Amex. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to the FT Bookshop. Delivery is 7–10 days, subject to availability. Postage & packing is free within the UK.

# Sundogs and frog falls

A decent enough overview of explained and unexplained ærial phenomena but it fails to convey the scientific ideas involved



### Fireballs, Skyquakes and Hums

**Probing the Mysteries of Light and Sound**

*Antony Milne*

Robert Hale 2011
Hb, 288pp, illus, notes, ind, £17.99, ISBN 9780709092780
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £16.19

The scope of this book is much wider than its title suggests, spanning the whole range of unusual phenomena occurring in the Earth's atmosphere. Some of these have their origins in outer space, like falling space junk, meteor showers, exploding bolides, auroræ and power blackouts attributed to solar activity. Others are meteorological in nature, such as various types of lightning, unusual cloud formations, rainbows, sundogs and mirages. And then there are the "unexplained" phenomena: fish and frog falls, chemtrails, spook lights, hums and other mysterious sounds… and, of course, unidentified flying objects.

As a wide-ranging survey of the basic empirical data, the book is excellent. Each type of phenomenon is dealt with in a few pages, so the discussion never gets bogged down in any one topic. Numerous examples are given, all thoroughly referenced in the end-notes, and with the emphasis on observations made in recent decades. Although it errs on the side of breadth rather than depth, the book provides a good starting-point for anyone wishing to delve deeper into the topics covered.

Where it falls down, and falls down rather badly, is in its failure to provide any real understanding of the causes of the observed phenomena. The jacket blurb tells us that the author, Antony Milne, used to work as a Research Fellow for NATO's Scientific Affairs Division, and that the book "covers all aspects of science to help the reader understand the wide range of natural objects and unexplained phenomena that can be seen so often in our skies". It would be great if it had made a serious attempt to do this, because there's potentially a lot of science here – ranging from textbook optics and acoustics to orbital dynamics and plasma physics. As it is, the book's scientific "explanations" are too brief and too fragmented (often with alarming irrelevancies and non sequiturs) to explain anything to anyone. Maybe Milne was afraid of alienating non-scientific readers, but the result will only confuse such readers… and leave scientists infuriated by its imprecision.

Here is just one example. The trajectories of bolides and Near Earth Objects (NEOs) are governed by the law of gravity, so you need to establish a basic understanding of this before you can talk about impact events. There's no need to bore the reader with equations – a few diagrams can convey the basic principles of elliptical and hyperbolic orbits, and the surprising complexities of the three-body problem. But rather than taking a pictorial approach, Milne comes up with statements like "gravitational forces… become vague in regard to their influence on the trajectory of bolides as they wing their way to Earth" and "an NEO on a gravity-tugged trajectory could only orbit a larger body and eventually crash-land". The first statement is cryptic and misleading, while the second is just plain wrong.

Many readers, of course, will simply be looking for the "unexplained". But that's no reason to be careless with the science: it's only by understanding the latter that you can distinguish the completely explained (e.g. noctilucent clouds) from the partially explained (e.g. ball lightning) and the completely baffling (e.g. mystery hums). Even a simple taxonomic analysis, classifying the various phenomena according to their context and characteristics, would have been useful in this respect.

The book includes 16 pages of colour plates, featuring library photographs of relatively mundane phenomena such as strange clouds, mirages and lightning. Apart from that, there are no illustrations at all – which is a pity, because as already mentioned, a few diagrams would have helped enormously in conveying the scientific ideas involved. In one chapter, Milne attempts to describe some common visual illusions without the aid of the images he's referring to. I'm not sure if this is laziness or a tour de force!

At the end there is a useful section of notes, a bibliography and an index, but no glossary. This is a serious omission, due to the vast number of technical terms used. Even if the definitions had been highlighted using bold type or callouts it would have been better than simply burying them in the text.

If you're interested in reading a fast-paced account of a wide range of phenomena, and you're happy to view it as nothing more than a jumping-off point for further speculations or research, then you might seriously consider buying this book. On the other hand, if you're expecting it to answer your questions, you'll probably be disappointed.

**Andrew May**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**STRONG ON DATA BUT WEAK ON THEORY, SADLY** **7**

---

### Dark World

**Into the Shadows with the Lead Investigator of the Ghost Adventures Crew**

*Zak Bagans & Kelly Crigger*

Victory Belt 2011
Hb, £24.00, 272pp, illus, ISBN 9781936608850
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £22.00

Dark World
Zak Bagans

Zak Bagans has a secret dungeon under his house, pumps iron and is licensed to carry a concealed weapon. This might make him scarier than the stories he tells in this, his first book. It is reassuring to read, then, that he has neither worshipped the Devil nor drunk blood, although he has an unhealthy relationship with one too many demons.

Bagans is the angry young man of the grab-a-cam school of paranormal investigation and is known for his confrontational style. He has produced an informal, chatty book. We get a lot of background information, a picture of one of his tattoos and a handy 'fast facts' on the ghost hunter (he has never been referred to as 'the Zak').

Production values are high, especially if you enjoy moody pictures of Bagans. Pitched more at fans of his *Ghost Adventures* and *Paranormal Challenge* TV programmes, the book is nonetheless entertaining and fast-paced, even for those who have not seen the series.

What comes across strongly is Bagans' gung-ho enthusiasm for his subject and his passion to discover answers to the many questions that paranormal investigation raises. Scattered throughout are tips on ghost-hunting gathered in Bagans's apprenticeship. He emphasises the triangulation of data as a reliable method of evidence-gathering.

This is not the sort of book to have notes, bibliography or index, but there is a quick rundown of some explanations for paranormal phenomena, and a selective Who's Who of the people Bagans thinks are shaping paranormal research today.

**Leo Ruickbie**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**ENTHUSIASTIC AND GUNG-HO GUIDE TO GHOST-HUNTING** **6**

# ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

## TRACKING THE MAN-BEASTS

*Joe Nickell*

Prometheus Books (prometheusbooks.com) 2011
Pb, pp239, illus, £16.99
ISBN 9781616144159

This is a wide-ranging romp through 22 types of anthropomorphic monsters, divided into five main classes: monstrous men (dwarves, giants and wild men); hairy man-beasts (manimals); supernaturals (vampires, werewolves); extraterrestrials (aliens, mothman etc); hybrids; and merpeople. Nickell is at his best when solving cases which supply some sort of tangible evidence – sideshow exhibits, hairs, footprints, photos – but seems less convincing on cases which might be classed as 'psychosocial'. That said, Nickell does show worthy flashes of insight… and humour (as in his delightful drawing of an alien timeline on p185).

Nickell is proclaimed by his CSI (formerly CSICOP) colleagues as "the world's only full-time, professional science-based paranormal investigator" (probably true, as none of the others get paid for it), and here takes a break from demolishing spooks, frauds and psychics. He writes well and knowledgeably, but his confidence in his own opinions won't go down well outside his circle of fans, especially as it is so rigid at times.

A case in point is that old *FT* favourite Popobawa, the bat-winged, buggering demon of Zanzibar. Someone gave Nickell a newsclipping about it, saying: "Here's a case for you to solve." Nickell writes: "I read a few paragraphs and replied, 'I have solved it.'" For Nickell it was a waking dream, not a monster, so: case solved! Forteans probably never thought the story was about a cryptid in any case, but part of a wider collective psychogenic phenomenon, like India's 'Monkeyman' or the recent 'grease devils' panic in Sri Lanka. And herein lies the book's main fault: all these different humanoids, from the corporeal to the (literally) fantastic, are dealt with in the same coolly analytical way and, except in a few major cases, without much background or context. Nickell's choice of such material is odd; why should he think of devoting nearly five pages to the study of vampire killing kits – "I was suspicious of them almost from the beginning" – unless it is to prove in an oblique way that "all vampires" are fictitious rubbish?

## THE REAL MEN IN BLACK

*Nick Redfern*

New Page Books (newpagebooks.com) 2011
Pb, pp256, bib, index, illus, £13.99
ISBN: 9781601631572

This latest study from the prolific Nick Redfern is a comprehensive recap of both the familiar and unfamiliar lore about these mysterious entities mostly, but not always, associated with UFOs. These retellings of important cases come from both sides of the Atlantic, and from folklore and mythology. Redfern also provides some focus on the people who claim to have met or been harassed by MIBs, who have investigated cases, and even some who claim to have invoked them. It's well-written and an easy read, with a useful bibliography and index.

## WITCH-HUNTING IN ENGLAND

*Andrew and David Pickering*

Amberley (amberley-books.com) 2010
Pb, pp224, index, bib, notes, £17.99
ISBN: 9781848686250

The Pickering brothers have a love of antiquarian subjects and witchcraft provides the quintessential example of the evidential art, social documentation, and paranoid lore of a society gone mad. In this excellent and useful book, the Pickerings attempt a straightforward and well-illustrated gazetteer of events in the English counties. This is preceded by an introduction which illuminates the origin of English witchcraft, what influenced it and the way it spread and manifested throughout England. Interestingly, through genealogical research, the authors find they are related to both witch-finders and some of their victims.

## HOMER'S SECRET ODYSSEY

*Florence and Kenneth Wood*

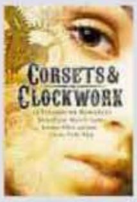
The History Press (the historypress.co.uk) 2011
Pb, pp240, index, bib, illus, £14.99
ISBN: 9780752460413

The Woods claim that for more than 2,000 years there has been "a persistent but unresolved belief that encrypted in [Homer's] two magnificent epics was a wealth of secret learning". The Woods are true believers, inspired by the work of amateur classicist Edna Johnston Leigh (Florence's mother, 1916–91), who pioneered the view that Homer was writing an astronomical work and edited their 1999 book *Homer's Secret Iliad*. Leigh's ideas were hotly criticised at the time by the academic establishment and in particular were reviled by Sir Arthur Evans. Considering that *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* were oral traditions long before Homer fixed them in words, the Woods are happy to give Homer credit as a genius for finding a way to preserve 'ancient' knowledge of calendars, astronomy, mathematics and engineering which the Woods trace back as far as 2300 BC. On the 'Homeric Question' – who was Homer, when did he live, and how reliable are the traditions in his epics? – the Woods are not as helpful. But this is an interesting 'alternative' deconstruction of the epics with lots of challenging insights.

# FORTEAN FICTION

## Corsets and Clockwork: 13 Steampunk Romances

*Ed. Trisha Telep*



Constable and Robinson, 2011
Pb pp448 £6.99
ISBN 9781849016582

Trisha Telep's collection of 13 tales offers romance in worlds populated by dirigibles, infernal mechanisms and palpitating hearts; but while some stories have a tangible wrought iron filigree feel about them, others in the collection exhibit only a vaguely recognisable steampunk milieu, objects being props to a romantic tale rather than part of its essence. One writer's vaguely realised 'flying machine' becomes another's 'airborne pig', spouting steam and sparks, and it's this sense of detail and place that some writers execute more successfully than others; granted, a clear line between urban fantasy and cast iron steampunk is sometimes hard to define. There is a strong element of YA-oriented fantasy in the collection, set to appeal to Twilighters tired of drippy protagonists. There are also tales of a darker hue, both in terms of the smoky, steampunk metropolis portrayed and of the human desires played out within it – like Frewin Jones's tale of London-bound human-mermaid hybrid Silka, 'The Cannibal Fiend of Rotherhithe'. Maria V Snyder's alternative WWII tale 'Under Amber Skies' is crawling with Nazi-killing mechanical crabs amid equally dangerous mother-daughter strife. Adrienne Kress's WWI yarn 'The Clockwork Corset' involves a cross-dressing lass trying to protect her lover from the horrors of the front, while Caitlin Kittredge's 'The Vast Machinery of Dreams' presents horrors of a Lovecraftian kind. Lesley Livingston's classy opener 'Rude Mechanicals' invokes shades of Kleist and Hoffmann in a young man's fatal fascination with a gorgeous Shakespeare-spouting 'Actromatron' and exhibits absorbing descriptive flair.

**Nick Čirkovič**

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS AND GAMES TO:
THE EDITOR, **FORTEAN TIMES**, DENNIS CONSUMER DIVISION,
30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD, UK.

## Wagner: Tony Palmer's Classic Films

Dir Tony Palmer, UK 1983-2010

Gonzo Multimedia, £49.99

Tony Palmer has been making films about music and musicians since the Sixties – from Frank Zappa and Renée Fleming to Benjamin Britten and Ginger Baker. It's probably his studies of composers like Vaughan Williams, Holst, Puccini, and Shostakovich – sometimes in the form of documentaries, sometimes of dramas – for which he'll ultimately be remembered, and the centrepiece of this four-film set – Palmer's 1983 biopic of Richard Wagner – is, for me, far and away the greatest of them.

It was a hugely ambitious European co-production made on a truly Wagnerian scale impossible to imagine in these financially and intellectually straitened times. Nearly eight hours long, it was shot in over 200 locations across Europe (many of them the ones where the historical events took place) and filled to bursting with thespian talent – there's even some three-handed scenes for surely the ultimate triumvirate of British luvvies, Olivier, Richardson and Gielgud; and there are cameos, too, from musical luminaries such as Sir William Walton and the wonderful Dame Gwyneth Jones.

The film – originally made for television – is sumptuous to look at, courtesy of Vittorio Storaro's lush cinematography, blessed with a witty script of rare intelligence by Charles Wood and boasts the last screen turn of Richard Burton in the title role. Burton, surprisingly perhaps, turned in one of the greatest performances of his career, somehow bringing this most complex of artists to life in all his contradictory and often awful greatness – Burton brings to life an irresistible monster characterised by ranting antisemitism, profound artistic vision, utter self-belief and boundless vanity.

Vanessa Redgrave is almost as good as the composer's ghastly yet vital muse Cosima, but this is Burton's show from start to finish, a glorious and unexpected swansong. OK, he's a bit long in the tooth for the early scenes recalling the young Dresden kapellmeister's part in the 1848 revolution, but by the time we've got to the epic *folie à deux* with King Ludwig II of Bavaria that gave us the Ring cycle (not to mention the vertiginous proto-Disney madness that is Neuschwanstein Castle), Burton has pretty well *become* Wagner, silk undies and all. Marvellous.

And of course, there's the music (recorded by Solti and finally done justice in this remastered version), which prompts a sometimes Eisensteinian flow of visual ideas from Palmer – ideas that occasionally rise to match, and sometimes interrogate, the beauty and fecundity of the composer's own vision.

Palmer's own response to Wagner and his legacy is far from straightforward, as the other films in this set reveal. *The Wagner Family* is a documentary about what happened after Wagner's death in 1883 – a sprawling dynastic soap opera in which one family attains heights of dysfunction never dreamed of in *Dallas* or *East Enders*. It's a bit weighted towards Gottfried Wagner's obsession with uncovering the Bayreuth establishment's collusion with the Nazi regime and refusal to acknowledge its past, but it's gripping stuff nonetheless; for a fuller and more nuanced picture, though, read Jonathan Carr's excellent book *The Wagner Clan*.

Of most interest to forteans will be *Parsifal: The Search for the Grail*, in which tenor legend (and frequent interpreter of the title role) Placido Domingo takes us on a tour through Wagner's final operatic exploration of myth, touching on centuries of Grail lore with the help of religious historian Karen Armstrong and others. The film is almost as contradictory as the work it explores – and, at times, æsthetically jarring as we switch between a Gergiev-conducted performance of the opera and Palmer's atrocity stock footage shock tactics. It provides no easy answers to how we should interpret this great, baffling work (even the Nazis couldn't decide whether it should be banned or celebrated, hilariously promising that Hitler would arrive at a final solution to the *Parsifal* problem when he'd finished conquering Europe). Is it the most beautiful music ever written? A reworking of the Grail mythos for the modern age? A deeply racist piece of Aryan propaganda? A post-Christian plea for universal compassion? Or, as one talking head has it, a "Black Mass" performed on the opera house stage? Perhaps, with a text as endlessly rich and deeply ambiguous as this, there is no definitive answer… although Domingo comes down firmly on the side of its humanitarian message.

The last disc is a surprisingly impressive silent biopic of the Bayreuth master from 1913, which can also be watched with Palmer's amusing if not particularly insightful commentary track. All in all, it's a very good set (the films are also available separately) and the perfect Christmas gift for Wagnerians, opera lovers and students of myths ancient and modern.

**David Sutton**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**INDISPENSIBLE VIEWING FOR THE MUSICAL FORTEAN** **9**

## Take Shelter

Dir Jeff Nichols, US 2011

On UK release from 25 November

Curtis, the foreman of a sand-mining company, lives a happy but financially precarious life with his wife Samantha, who takes in sewing, and their deaf child Hannah, whose medical bills are a constant worry.

The film opens with Curtis watching a twister in the distance. The sky becomes ominous, and an oily yellow rain falls. It is the first of a series of vivid dreams centred on his home and family that seep into his daily reality – the family dog savages him in the vision, and his arm hurts the next day. The coming apocalypse feels real, but he has reached the age at which his mother's schizophrenia first manifested. He starts to worry that the greatest threat to his family may be himself, but he puts them in financial peril by building an underground storm shelter. His behaviour becomes increasingly erratic; he loses his job, alienates his only friend and breaks down dramatically at a community supper. It is unclear whether he is descending into schizophrenia, expressing some sort of post-9/11, post-financial meltdown existential angst or – the least likely option – has seen the future, or rather the no-future. Samantha tries to protect her husband and child (and her child from her husband), and to separate his hallucinations from reality. Jessica Chastain is convincing as a woman who is afraid and yet supportive, but Shannon, as an inarticulate and very ordinary blue-collar worker, is astonishing. His eyes seem to sink into his skull as anxiety gives way to psychosis – or whatever it is.

The ending, which I won't spoil, is not totally convincing (there's a bit of directorial eating your cake and having it too), and the film could have been 10 minutes shorter, but it is a very effective thriller, and Michael Shannon's portrayal of an anguished man is stupendous.

**Val Stevenson**

**Fortean Times Verdict**
A TENSE EXPLORATION OF APOCALYPSE AND ANXIETY **8**

## Mimic: The Director's Cut

Dir Guillermo del Toro, US 1997
Studio Canal, £14.99

Guillermo del Toro's *Mimic* was never going to be the world's greatest movie – not even the world's greatest bug movie. However, the interference the film suffered at the hands of its producers back in 1997 virtually sunk any chance it had of making an impact. The movie features Jeremy Northam and Mira Sorvino as biologists responsible for a new strain of evolving insects that begin to imitate people to blend in.

Del Toro learned his lessons from *Mimic* and moved on to far better things with *The Devil's Backbone*, *Pan's Labyrinth* and the two *Hellboy* movies. Now the film has been re-cut by the director for Bluray and Del Toro claims that this revised version, while not perfect, is somewhat closer to his original intentions 15 years ago.

There's no doubt it's a better film, with its themes explored more fully and its sound design and lighting schemes (especially in the climatic underground scenes) better represented on this Blu-ray. However, the real value here is in del Toro's account – in his very informative solo commentary and the extra feature *Reclaiming Mimic* – of the creation of the movie and the compromises made along the way. It was only his second feature (after *Cronos*) and his first Hollywood experience, so he was eager to please. The biggest lesson he learned was the power of saying "No" to others' suggestions. It's good to have an alternative, slightly improved version of this film, but it is still little more than an efficient B-movie about menacing bugs, lacking the fairytale touches of del Toro's later, more magical work. The behind-the-scenes tale told here is perhaps more interesting than any version of the actual movie.

**Brian J Robb**

**Fortean Times Verdict**
SLIGHTLY IMPROVED BUG FILM FROM THE YOUNG DEL TORO... **7**

## Julia's Eyes

Dir Don McKellar, Canada 1998
Optimum Home Entertainment, £17.99/£22.99

Julia (affectingly played by Belén Rueda) is investigating the recent suicide of her sister. As she suffers from the same degenerative eye disease, Julia's quest to discover the truth about her sister's mysterious demise will bring her ever closer to the same fate. One of the most compelling, atmospheric horror thrillers recently released, *Julia's Eyes* shows clear references to some distinguished antecedents – there are moments which recall *Peeping Tom*, *Rear Window* and *Wait Until Dark* – while retaining an air of European vérité throughout its first half. Director Guillem Morales cleverly ramps up the slow-burn suspense, not only through his handling of the unfolding action but by keeping the audience in doubt as to what sub-genre of horror this is; at the same time as we are led into the horror of the impending darkness threatened by Julia's deteriorating sight, we are also led into the impending darkness that is the horrific truth about her sister's demise.

By turns spine-tingling, gruesome and harrowing, *Julia's Eyes* contains palpable shocks, yet is shot through with pathos and a sense of the burden of loss. It's undeniable that the logic of Julia's actions at a crucial midway point in the film is questionable, and this has divided audiences; but to achieve a sense of the transcendent amid the darkness of despair ultimately makes this Guillermo del Toro presentation superior horror fare.

**Nick Čirkovič**

**Fortean Times Verdict**
DEL TORO PRESENTS A SATISFYING SLICE OF HORROR **8**

# SHORTS

### CANNIBAL

Matchbox Films, £15.99)

It's a question philosophers and poets have pondered for æons; at what point do you realise your girlfriend is a nutter? Is it when you find her unconscious and half-naked in a wood (your first date), when she cheats on you, or when she starts eating her lovers alive… and face first? Plato and co. never came to a definitive answer, while this film offers the questionable solution: "Why worry? Just become as nuts as her." So Max (Nicholas Gob), buries the bodies and procures the beautiful Bianca (Helena Coppejans) more young flesh to nosh on. Apparently a "who's-who" of Belgian cinema and TV (sorry, me neither), the film has little dialogue (thankfully, eg: "I am ill and the illness I know is God"), lots of meaningful glances and stares and some sort of meditation on the (im)moral complicity inherent in voyeurism. I liked it; my fellow viewer hated it, and for exactly the same reasons. Like raw face, it's probably a matter of taste. **Tim Weinberg 7/10**

### DRAMARAMA SPOOKY: THE COMPLETE SERIES

(Network, £19.99)

DRAMARAMA
SPOOKY

Many may remember this after-school Thames Television treat from the Eighties, though I was unaware of it. Seven slight slices of children's drama cover the basics of horror; "War Games with Caroline" is a neat time-slip ghost story, where a lad in detention suddenly has the opportunity to change a tragic episode from WWII, while "The Exorcism of Amy" concerns an imaginary childhood friend. Minuscule budgets mean much is achieved merely through tight writing by a host of folks whose credentials aren't to be sniffed at, including BAFTA winners, *Grange Hill* contributors and popular children's writers such as Leon Garfield and Alan Garner. Fun, if dated; part of the joy is recognising the future stars of *East Enders*. **TW 6/10**

### ROGUE NINJA

(MVM, £15.99)

ROGUE NINJA

Director Seija Chiba (*Alien Vs. Ninja*) hasn't got the resources of some Japanese companies, so works to his strengths – namely brilliantly choreographed action sequences and the beauty and grace of his leading-lady Mika Hijii. An old-fashioned tale of comradeship, loyalty and betrayal, it's enjoyable in a balletic, no-blood, *Water Margin* sort of way – although a couple of nasty moments made me question its PG rating. **TW 6/10**

### BLACK HEAVEN

(Entertainment One/Arrow Films, £8.99)

black heaven

A lost mobile phone leads young French couple Gaspard and Marion to involvement with another couple engaged in a suicide pact. Gaspard is drawn into the weird world of online game *Black Hole*. Playing with concepts of identity (real and online), Gilles Marchand's movie deals with interesting ideas, but outstays its welcome, limping to a rather lame conclusion. It's pretty enough, both in the French countryside and the *Tron*-like online world, while Louise Bourgoin provides great eye candy as a Marilyn Monroe/Debbie Harry-style femme fatale. There's a feeling this really wants to be a modern *Videodrome*. Despite the intriguing set-up and some interesting notions, it's a missed opportunity. **BJR 5/10**

## Dark Souls

Xbox 360, PS3 £39.99, From Software/Namco

The tricky part of *Dark Souls…* is simply staying alive.

This is a tough game. As with its PS3 predecessor *Demon Souls*, expect fearsome fantasy encounters and the promise of frequent deaths. Do not approach this game unless you are prepared for the challenging adventure that awaits. Hours of intense, deadly combat, a devious open world full of monsters (ranging from rats to towering giants), and the elation of slicing them down to size.

You play an 'Undead'; escaping from a prison in a mysterious world, you learn of your role in an ancient prophecy to lift a curse that has befallen the land – a curse that will see you constantly resurrected upon death, your humanity sucked away, bit by bit. Your first quest is to ring two bells located across this ancient land. This plot develops at a deathly pace. Quite literally.

You are given little guidance and no handholding save for the mysterious glowing graffiti on floors or rare summoning of other players to fight alongside you. The world is surprisingly open and you are encouraged to explore, but be prepared to stumble into the lair of many a beast. Curiosity will definitely kill the cat.

Choosing one of 10 standard archetypes (Warrior, Thief, Pyromancer, and so on), your aim is to kill enemies and absorb their souls. This allows you to level up or purchase equipment. When you die, you drop these souls and resurrect at a bonfire. You must return to where you fell to retrieve your most recently dropped souls but any older ones are now lost.

In the unfortunate tradition of Japanese RPGs, the controls and UI are not the most intuitive. Most of this feels deliberate: the game wants you to be completely prepared for combat at all times, and allows you some D-Pad shortcuts. Trying to pause and choose a different weapon halfway through a battle means you didn't prepare. But the interface is still clunky and the controls need a combination of three button presses just to make your warrior jump.

Graphics are good, and the environments have a haunting quality – expect dark shadows cast by high castle keeps, dense murky forests and dilapidated ruins. Areas may seem labyrinthine at first but soon reveal clever shortcuts; the brilliant level design provides glimpses and hints to far off treasures or terrifying enemies that lie in wait. Progress is made by lighting bonfires you can respawn at should you die (which you will – and often).

There is a huge variety of unique enemies, each with their own set of attacks and weaknesses. This is no dungeon hack'n slash. Careful management of your stamina and blocking are the keys to success. Your principal action – attacking – displays the greatest range of animations that satisfyingly convey weight, poise, readiness and power. Don't expect the same level of finesse to extend to the rest of your character. No shimmying along ledges or "Nathan Drake" style gymnastics. Your sole concern is combat, and the art of staying alive.

Sound design opts for a sparse audioscape, making *Dark Souls* a foreboding, solemn affair. Your character is tight-lipped too, leading to some stilted and one-sided conversations. Plus for a game that relies heavily on reading enemy movements and attack patterns around you, it's a shame positional audio is so weak.

While it looks and plays like a single-player game, *Dark Souls* does something more. The wonderful interconnectedness of everyone's games, via the graffiti visible to other players and the chance to be summoned or invade another player's game, leads to some of the most memorable moments.

I was summoned by another player to help kill the boss by the first bell tower. Boss defeated, the game returns me to my world. A minute later, I hear the bell tolling in my game. Certain actions performed by players are shared live across games throughout the world. The more you play, the more you will discover the full extent of this concept.

While at times *Dark Souls* may feel as if it's draining you of your will to play, perseverance pays off – there is so much to discover. It's tough, unique and certainly not for everyone, but I can't deny that its finely-tuned combat and secrets hidden in a world of dark beauty have an enthralling quality that make me want to go back for more.

**Alexander Norman**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**YOU'LL DIE – A LOT – BUT THE REWARDS ARE WELL WORTH IT** **9**

## Saints Row the Third

Xbox 360, PS3 £49.99, PC £39.99, Volition/THQ

Saints alive! It's barking mad! Before leaving Stilwater, setting for the game's two previous outings, an every-which-way crazy bank raid erupts and the Saints – now celebrities – find themselves being asked for autographs amidst hails of gunfire and while downing helicopter gunships; this intro packs more action than some games muster in their entirety.

There follows some barmy character-customisation: has sporting a bunny suit always been your fancy? Who is anyone else to judge? From then on, the water is anything but still. Once in the city of Steelport, you romp around a psychopath's sandbox trying to conquer the gangland competition and earning dosh and 'Respect' RPG upgrades by as many fairly foul means as possible.

What is there to say about a game which defies all that's sane and holy and will have your partner or parents gazing horrified over your havoc-wreaking shoulder? In a GTA-free year, *Saint's Row The Third* more than steps out of the shadow of that bullyboy of a game franchise, carving out its own distinct neighbourhood while defying the dictates of decency (and seemingly the laws of physics, too). Its main story missions, and plenty of nefariousness on the side, never let up: everything from crashing cars in insurance fraud scams, exposing yourself along a public highway (only for a dare, honest!), and just destroying stuff with tanks and helicopters.

Developers Volition have gone so far beyond any semblance of normality in their creative vision it's a wonder they got their hands free from those straight jackets to program anything. *Saint's Row The Third* is huge fun, eschewing such niceties as plot in favour of weapon-toting mayhem and bitch-slapping celebrity culture with a clunking 'Apoca-Fist' slam dunk while it's at it. And it's all done, gloriously, in the worst possible taste.

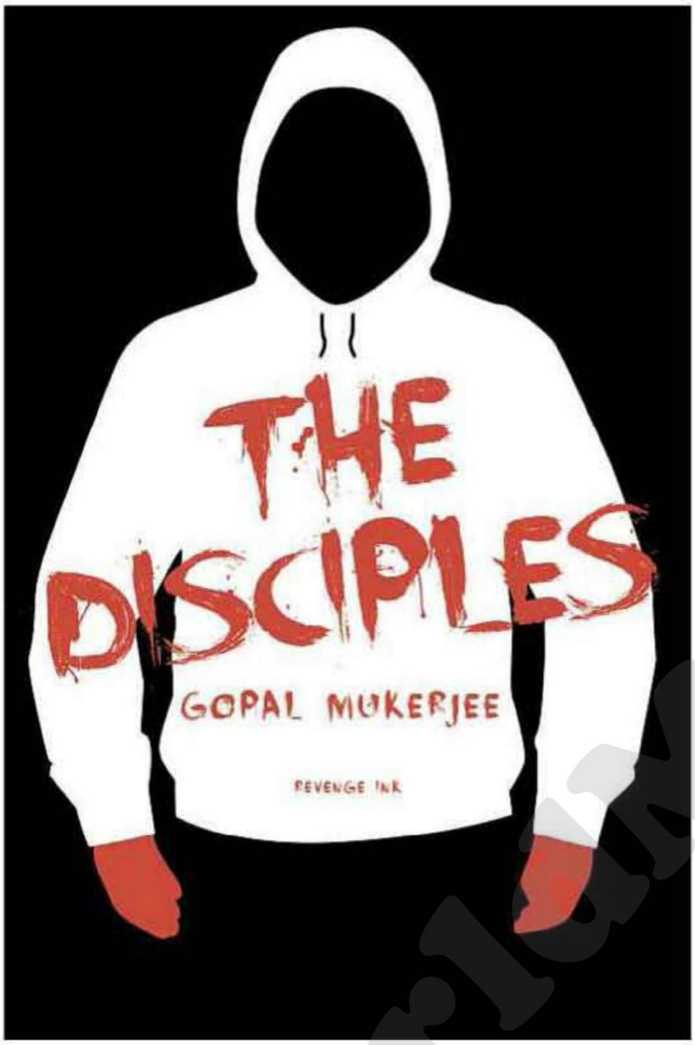
**Nick Čirkovič**

**Fortean Times Verdict**

**A GUN-TOTING, MIND-BOGGLING, TONGUE-POKING TRIUMPH** **9**

# REVENGE INK

## THIS HALLOWEEN, READ YOUR WAY TO THE DARKSIDE

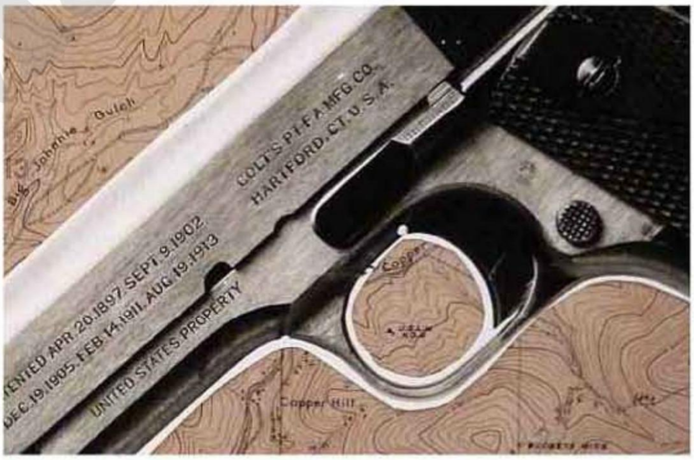

THE DISCIPLES
GOPAL MUKERJEE
REVENGE INK

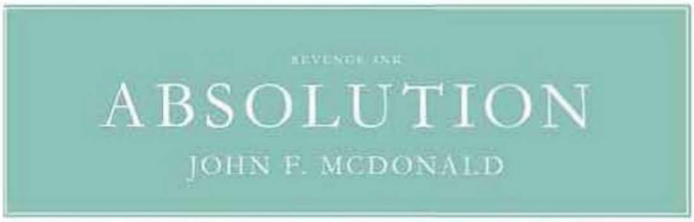
### THE DISCIPLES: A NOVEL FOR THE APOCALYPSE,

### GOPAL MUKERJEE (CO-FOUNDER REVENGE INK)

ISBN 978-0-9565119-5-9
RELEASE: OCTOBER 31, 2011 PRICE: £7.99

REVENGE INK HALLOWEEN FEATURE. The time: the near future. The place: America, a fractured and nightmarish cityscape. A quartet of demented and violent psychopaths embark on a nocturnal 'Bull Run', a savage and surreal road trip undertaken at the behest of their Meister', Buford Aloysius Howell, also known as the *Lord Baron of Pain*. Over one single night, the trip spirals downward into a morass of bizarre pit stops, necrophilia, cultish torture and ritualized slaughter. Truly a 'novel for the apocalypse', a narrative that mingles humour and violence in a prolonged, delirious *danse macabre*.


COLT'S PT. F.A. MFG. CO.
HARTFORD, CT. U.S.A.
PATENTED APR. 20.1897. SEPT. 9.1902
DEC. 19.1905. FEB. 14.1911. AUG. 19.1913
UNITED STATES PROPERTY


REVENGE INK
ABSOLUTION
JOHN F. MCDONALD

### ABSOLUTION,

### JOHN F MCDONALD

ISBN 978-0-9565119-4-2
RELEASE: SEP 22, 2011 PRICE: £7.99

From the co-author of bestselling memoir **Borstal Girl** comes a densely researched thriller about terrorism and fundamentalism in *all* their forms. When Mohammed Sharif from Kashmir finds a 'miracle' emerald in Burma, he takes it to his new friend, Christian Childe, an English financial trader in Bangkok. They seek out Daniel Hutten, a Jewish gemstone expert from New York. But will these unlikely friends find peace? Or will their pasts return to haunt them? Read this and find out.

**REVENGE INK** REVENGEINK.COM
WHEN GENIUS IS DEAD, EVERYMAN COUNTS...

WorldMags.net

# ALCHEMY 1977

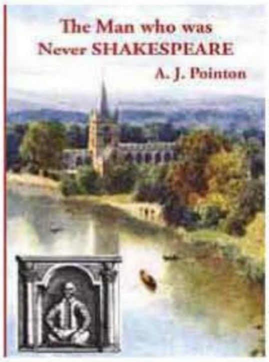
## ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE

Alchemy Metal-Wear
UL13 & UL17
Alchemy Gothic
Alchemy Empire
Alchemy Poker
Alchemy England Apparel
Alchemy Studios Custom Shop

For Alchemy 1977 Alternative
Lifestyle Catalogue pack.
Send £3.00 to The Closet,
Alchemy, Hazel Drive
Leicester LE3 2JE
or
Free if you register on line at:
**www.closetalchemy.com**

**WWW.ALCHEMY1977.COM**

Please quote **FT1111** when responding to this advert.


The Man who was
Never SHAKESPEARE
A. J. Pointon

**The Man who was Never Shakespeare**

PARAPRESS

William Shakspere was a rich businessman from Stratford-upon-Avon, and also a minor actor. But was he also the great play-wright who wrote under the name SHAKESPEARE? Or is that just a case of identity theft?

ISBN 978-1-898594-88-8
Illustrated paperback

**Retail price: £12.00**

*Through detailed study of the evidence around the question of "who wrote SHAKESPEARE?", Tony Pointon here restores to William Shakspere his real identity, and removes the myths that have distorted his and his family's real lifestyle.*

PARAPRESS, *9 Frant Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 5SD, UK.*
Tel/Fax: (01892) 512118. **Buy online: www.parapress.myzen.co.uk**

**ALL OUT OF PRINT BOOKS LOCATED**

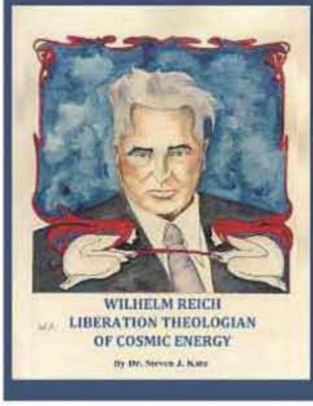
HP Bookfinders (est 1986),
Mosslaird, Brig O'Turk
FK17 8HT, Scotland
01877 376 377

**www.hp-bookfinders.co.uk**

**FAMOUS SCRIBBLES**

**Authentic Film & Television Autographed Photos & Memorabilia AFTAL Approved Dealer #72**

**www.famousscribbles.co.uk**
**Tel No: 01892 610384**


WILHELM REICH
LIBERATION THEOLOGIAN
OF COSMIC ENERGY
By Dr. Steven J. Katz

**LIBERATION THEOLOGIAN OF COSMIC ENERGY**

This work explores the spiritual implications of the last years of inventor, scientist and philosopher Dr. Wilhelm Reich. New facts are revealed about Dr. Reich's UFO contacts and his discovery of a metaphysical portal during the Oranur Experiment. This is the secret and suppressed evidence of Reich's major breakthrough into the occult.

Available at
skatz.magcloud.com

**From Mystery... To Mastery**

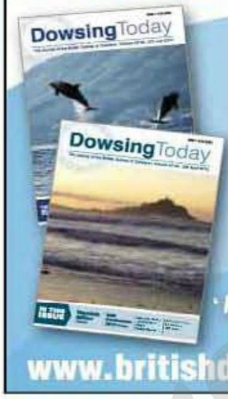
**Dowsing Courses**

- Foundation for absolute beginners and novices
- Environmental Healing
- Earth Energies & Geopathic Stress
- Dowsing for Health
- Water Divining

Special offer! Join BSD now and receive our free magazine & e-newsletter

'At the heart of dowsing since 1933'

**www.britishdowsers.org 01684 576969**


Dowsing Today
Dowsing Today

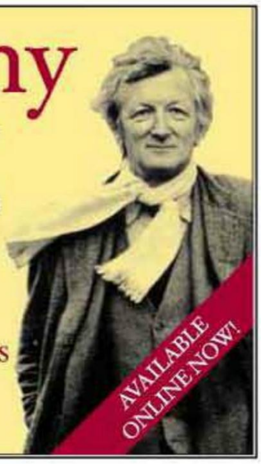
# Michellany

*A John Michell Reader*

A few copies now available to FT readers • Contributors include FT founder Bob Rickard & Rupert Sheldrake • Numbered memorial volume for family & friends • New material about the celebrated author of *A View Over Atlantis* & *Flying Saucer Vision*

NOT AVAILABLE IN BOOKSHOPS
Send name & address to:
michellany@johnmichell.com
www.johnmichell.com

AVAILABLE ONLINE NOW!



# How We Were Made

A book of revelations

***by William Neil***

**THIS IS A MUCH ENLARGED 4TH EDITION**

*"...... Neil demonstrates a host of dazzling numerical correspondences, mostly extrapolated from the famous number 666; multiplied out (6 x 6 x 6), it gives a key number 216, which produces other fundamental constants when it is divided or multiplied. ... Neil applies his findings to show how 666 and related numbers can be found in the human form... in monuments like the Great Pyramid and Stonehenge, in the Earth's position in the solar system, and in ancient and modern measuring systems. It can even be seen in the "building and placing" of the moon. ... If you're fascinated by numbers and sacred geometry, this book will be a treat."*

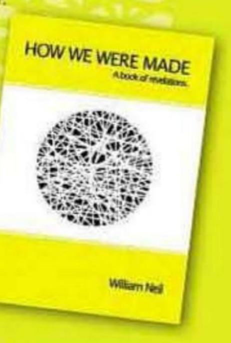
**Nexus Magazine review, Aug/Sept 2007**

*"Highly recommended"*

**David Icke**

**Order this best seller now!**

ISBN 978-0-9545957-3-9
williamneil.co.uk
Send a cheque or postal order for £15, with your details, to:
Oracle Books. P.O. Box 2467, Reading, England, RG4 7WU
Also from Waterstone's, or any bookshop, and amazon.co.uk

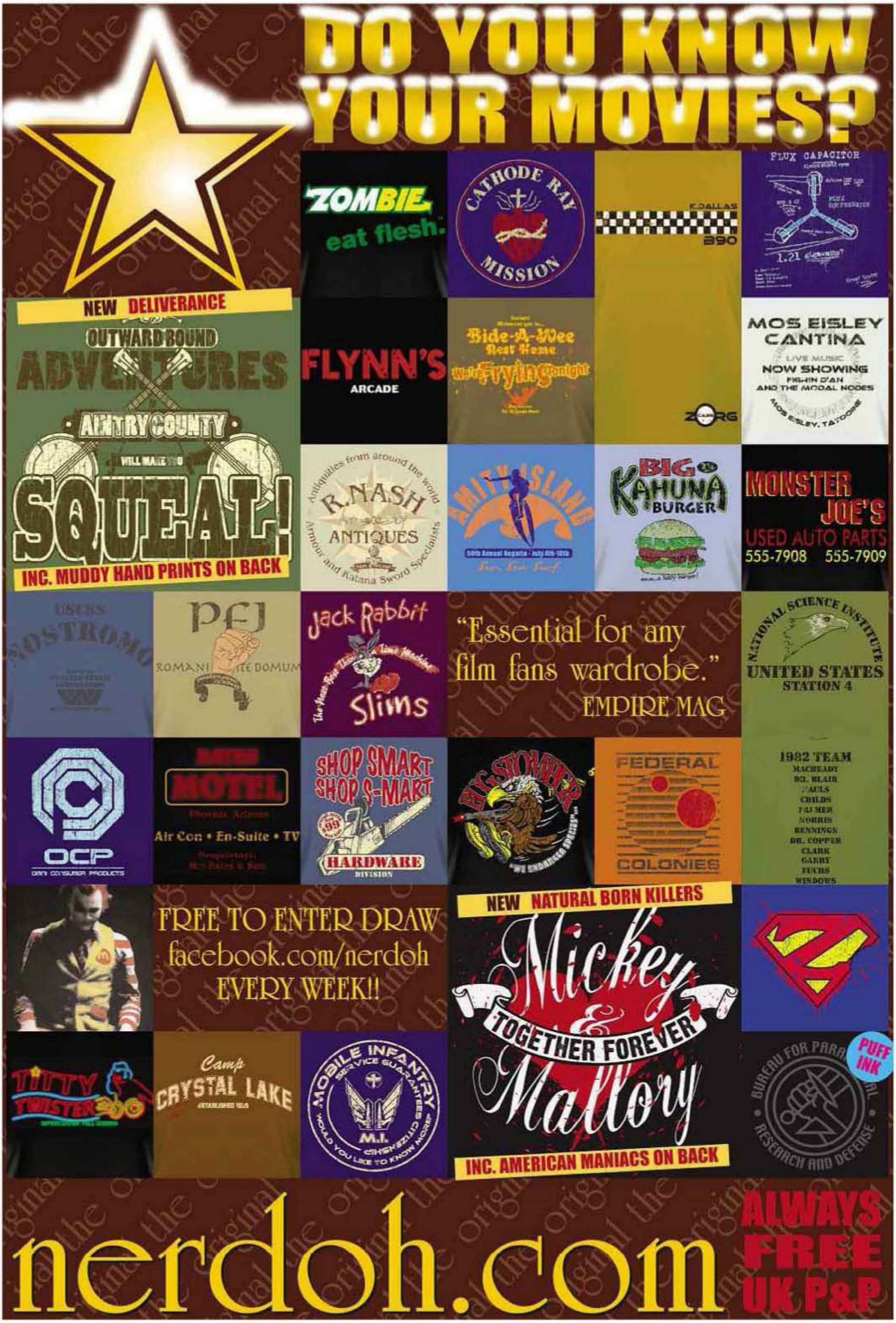

HOW WE WERE MADE
A book of revelations
William Neil

**WWW.BLADES-UK.COM**

Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm 0845 226 5514

also stock:
Hell Boy
Batman
Back to the Future
World of Froud
Bleeding Edge
Planet of the Apes
Star Wars
Star Trek
Van Helsing
Marvel Comics
Bleeding Edge
Buffy
Hall of Horror
James Bond
Matrix
Scarface
Also Accept Paypal, Nochex, Moneybookers & cheques.

**TO ADVERTISE HERE**
Call
Ryan on
**0207 907 6763**



DO YOU KNOW YOUR MOVIES?

NEW DELIVERANCE

INC. MUDDY HAND PRINTS ON BACK

"Essential for any film fans wardrobe."
EMPIRE MAG

FREE TO ENTER DRAW
facebook.com/nerdoh
EVERY WEEK!!

NEW NATURAL BORN KILLERS

INC. AMERICAN MANIACS ON BACK

nerdoh.com

ALWAYS FREE UK P&P
ZOMBIE eat flesh.
CATHODE RAY MISSION
K.DALLAS 390
FLUX CAPACITOR
1.21 gigawatts?
OUTWARD BOUND ADVENTURES
AINTRY COUNTY
WILL MAKE YOU SQUEAL!
FLYNN'S ARCADE
Bide-A-Wee Rest Home
We're Frying tonight
MOS EISLEY CANTINA
LIVE MUSIC
NOW SHOWING
FIGRIN D'AN AND THE MODAL NODES
MOS EISLEY, TATOOINE
ZORG
Antiquities from around the world
R. NASH ANTIQUES
Armour and Katana Sword Specialists
AMITY ISLAND
BIG KAHUNA BURGER
MONSTER JOE'S
USED AUTO PARTS
555-7908 555-7909
USCSS NOSTROMO
PFJ
ROMANI ITE DOMUM
Jack Rabbit Slims
NATIONAL SCIENCE INSTITUTE
UNITED STATES STATION 4
1982 TEAM
MACREADY
DR. BLAIR
PALMER
CHILDS
NORRIS
BENNINGS
DR. COPPER
CLARK
GARRY
FUCHS
WINDOWS
OCP
OMNI CONSUMER PRODUCTS
BATES MOTEL
Air Con • En-Suite • TV
SHOP SMART SHOP S-MART
HARDWARE DIVISION
BIG STOMPER
"WE ENDANGER SPECIES"
FEDERAL COLONIES
Mickey & Mallory
TOGETHER FOREVER
TITTY TWISTER
Camp CRYSTAL LAKE
MOBILE INFANTRY
SERVICE GUARANTEES CITIZENSHIP
M.I.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?
PUFF INK
BUREAU FOR PARANORMAL RESEARCH AND DEFENSE

CONTACT US BY POST: **BOX 2409 LONDON NW5 4NP**
OR E-MAIL **sieveking@forteantimes.com**
PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS

Dear FT...

# letters

## His master's voice

Mythchaser [**FT281:21**] relates the tale of how, according to Nigel Rees, Max Bygraves came fifth in a competition for Max Bygraves impressionists. A story in a similar vein was related by the late Lis Sladen, the actress renowned for playing *Doctor Who* companion Sarah Jane Smith, at the Dimensions Doctor Who Convention held in Washington, Tyne and Wear, which I attended back in 2007. Lis told the story of being at a Who Con in America along with John Leeson, who famously provided the voice of the Doctor's robotic dog, K9. Well before Leeson was due to make his first scheduled on-stage appearance at the event, the Con held a K9 soundalike competition. Given that the vast majority of the audience didn't know who he was, the actor decided to enter the contest for a bit of fun – and duly came second.

That's how Lis told it anyway, and you've simply got to believe someone who's travelled in time and space – haven't you?

**Martyn P Jackson**
*Cramlington, Northumberland*

## What dogs notice

Regarding Richard Thomas's letter about dogs and tai chi [**FT280:73**] I've owned dogs all my life, and have observed how most dogs of a vigilant nature, especially those who are also aggressive, notice and respond immediately to human beings moving in an unaccustomed manner. When they see someone moving very slowly, such as someone practising tai chi or a child very slowly approaching out of shyness, they react immediately, ears up.

At present, I have two small Chihuahuas. Nina is sweet-natured and very indifferent to the world around her. She doesn't respond to other dogs, sirens, knocks at the front door, or thunder. However, Chula is extremely interested in everything that occurs around her, and reacts immediately to these things.

When children play hide and seek in our local park, it is not those scampering around and making a noise that Chula notices and watches intently, but the child mostly hidden behind a tree and slowly and intermittently looking around the trunk to see if he or she has been detected. And many times, while we're out walking, I've noticed that Chula has stopped and is looking intently behind us, only to find one or more children slowly approaching at some remove, a few steps at a time, either out of shyness or simply hoping to creep up on us without being seen. On one occasion, it was an extremely aged woman approaching in the distance and taking the smallest steps imaginable.

So the dogs Mr Thomas encounters in the park may indeed be 'magnets' for his chi energy, but I think the likelier explanation is simply that they are entranced by the slow, deliberate, and mesmerising movements of his tai chi sessions.

**Joseph Barnes**
*By email*

## Animal talk

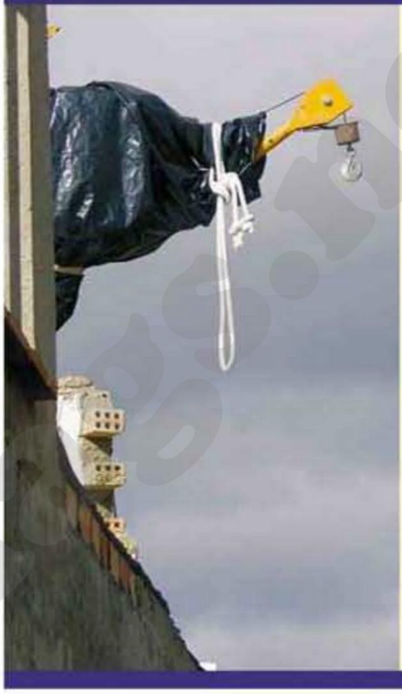
I'm not clear what David Hambling means when discussing grammar as word-order in his piece "Talking With Animals" [**FT278:14**]. Specifically as follows: "…but there are few who would claim that Kanzi can form grammatical sentences. 'Get red ball', 'ball get red' and 'red ball get' are all the same." Does he mean that there is a definitively "correct" way to order these three concepts when communicating? When a German speaker says "Ich bin in die Stadt gehen", this literally means "I am to the town going". Some Celtic languages might order "I am happy" into "happy I am". In other words, when communicating, the ordering of concepts (or their classifications – noun, verb, adjective etc) varies with different languages. This indicates there is no definitively correct way to order such concepts, and I'm sure we cannot conclude that a German or Cornish speaker understands concepts less well than an English speaker.

If he means that Kanzi himself varied his word order when seemingly communicating on different occasions, that tells us another story. Either way, I'm not sure that word order alone is a reliable measure of the profundity of one's understanding of concepts. (I'm not sure that not understanding the rules of English is either.)

Also, out of interest, I wonder how much "intelligence" was required for Nim or Washoe to recognise, interpret and react appropriately to the non-verbal cues of "prompting and modelling"? Unless of course you are a proponent of the language of behaviourism, simply reducing it to a conditioned response or similar as is referred to in the article.

**Sarah Louise**
*Exeter, Devon*

## Simulacra Corner



Rian Hughes photographed this crane on a building site in Andalucia, Spain, resembling a giant turkey looming over a wall.

*We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com – please tell us your postal address and we'll send you an exclusive **Fortean Times** gift.*

## Uneasy rider

Regarding the photograph of a man on a motorbike with a goat riding pillion, under the headline "Easy Rider" [**FT281:7**]: as much as it may be possible for goats to enjoy the open road, this one obviously isn't. You say it "appears to be holding on without the aid of any rope or strap", but the poor creature is quite clearly bound with twine on its muzzle and rope around its feet. It is not a "delightful photograph" but evidence of animal cruelty.

**Rebecca Raven**
*Erdington, Birmingham*

**Editor's note:** Oops! We should have examined the photograph more carefully.

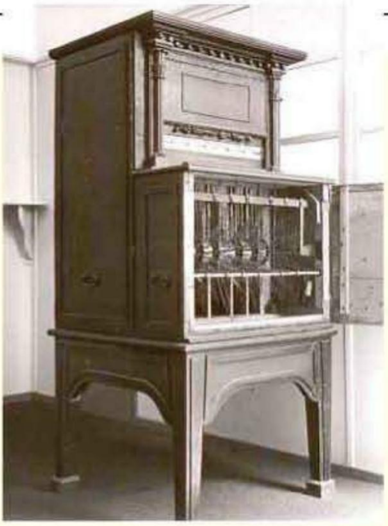
## Predictive powers

Harry Barkham [**FT281:67**] may well have predictive powers regarding bus fan belts, but as far as days of the week go, that is hardly the same thing. Identifying what day 24 April 2046 will be requires only a great deal of time-consuming mathematics. If Harry can do this in his head in less than the hours it might take me, then he certainly has some wild talent, but it doesn't involve prediction.

**Chris Dean**
*London*

worldmags.net

## Eureka addenda



ALFRED GILLETT TRUST

After my article on the Eureka machine [**FT280:38–40**] went to press, Tim Crumplin kindly sent me an uncatalogued manuscript from the Clark archives. It is clearly a draft or dummy of the BBC wireless programme. Its 28 pages abound in typographical errors, marginal queries, and wholesale pencilled deletions. Actor-writer Felix Felton (I recently saw him as the crusty mayor in that vintage British picture *It's Trad, Dad*) was in command, recalling his own schoolboy Latin verses, though not quite accurate on hexameter rules, also misquoting the *Aeneid*'s opening line, and making a terrible hash of an ancient Delphic Oracle story, putting King Darius (confused with Crœsus) against his own Persians. Felton specifies that it is to be a half-hour show, scheduled for 1952, alleged centenary of Clark's death, a bit premature for one who died on 23 May 1853.

Not the only misinformation slopping about. Only a few years after the Eureka's 1845 début, one writer misdated it to 1847, another attributed the invention to "the celebrated German mechanician, Prof. Faber".[1] This latter mixes up Joseph Faber's Euphonia, a polyglot (including Latin and Greek) automaton, exhibited in 1846, also at the Egyptian Hall, admission a bob.[2]

Felton ascribes restoration of the Eureka to "Mr F. Barry [actually, Berry], a pensioner". In *Clarks Comments* (June 1952), Berry is represented as working under the guidance of Charles Foster, "with some valued help from Mr Husband, Head of the Technical School (who specialises in old clocks)".

The machine was working, partially or wholly, a decade later, when *Clarks Courier* 148 (1963) reported a visiting group of boys from Westminster School watching it in action – can you imagine Hermione and company descending on it from Hogwarts?

I previously suggested a possible influence of the Eureka on the Versificator in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. What about similar conceivable inspirations from educational and literary sources on Clark?

On 29 September 1677, one John Peter distributed a pamphlet containing tables of letters under the title *Artificial Versifying: A New Way To Make Latin Verses*. He apparently had in mind a machine that could (I paraphrase his actual words) make people absolutely ignorant of Latin capable of constructing hexameters and pentameters that would scan and make sense.

Peter was granted a patent on 15 October 1677. Little is known of him, except that he was apparently a physician. His versifying method was developed with due acknowledgement (also crediting Peter with "an air of mystery") by Solomon Lowe in his *Arithmetic: In Two Parts* (1749), who calculated millions of possible verse combinations.[3]

We can't, of course, assume that Clark knew these (by now) obscure texts, though his deep and abiding interest in inventions and Latin verse may well have led him into investigating possible forerunners. And, if not, he would have been shaken by a letter in the *Athenæum* (5 July 1845, p669) pointing them out. However, it is a very good bet that he had read *Gulliver's Travels*. Describing (bk5, ch3) the Grand Academy of Lagado, Swift envisages a machine made of bits of wood plastered with bits of paper containing words, linked together with slender wires. Let Swift himself take over:

"By his [sc. the professor's] contrivance, the most ignorant person, at a reasonable charge, and with a little bodily labour, might write books in philosophy, poetry, politics, laws, mathematics, and theology, without the least assistance from genius or study… The pupils, at his command, took each of them hold of an iron handle, whereof there were forty fixed round the edges of the frame; and giving them a sudden turn, the whole disposition of the words was entirely changed… This work was repeated three or four times, and at every turn, the engine was so contrived, that the words shifted into new places, as the square bits of wood moved upside down."

Was this also an inspiration for Orwell, who wrote his famous essay "Politics v. Literature" on Swift[4] and dubbed him "one of the greatest imaginative writers who has ever lived?"[5]

### NOTES

[1] MLR Breslar: "Latin Hexameters by Machinery," *Notes & Queries* (4 Mar 1911), series2 no3, p168; Anon: "Latin Versification for the Million," *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, v13 (30 Mar 1850), pp205–07.

[2] Full account in Richard D Altick: *The Shows of London*, Harvard Univ. Press, 1978, pp353–6; cf. p356 for the Eureka.

[3] This information on Peter and Lowe owes a debt to E Bensly's reply to Breslar (n1, above), *N&Q* (1 April 1911), pp249–50, with lavish quotations from both and detailed analysis of their metrical calculations.

[4] *Polemic* 5 (Sept–Oct 1946), available online.

[5] In his *Tribune* "As I Please" column ('Can Socialists be happy?') for 24 Dec 1943.

### FURTHER READING

Jason David Hall: "Popular Prosody: Spectacle and the Politics of Victorian Versification," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 62, 2007, pp222–49.

Other contemporary reports on the Eureka exhibition in: *Athenæum*; *Times*; *Annual Register*; handbill WCL, D137/Egyptian Hall.

**Barry Baldwin**
*Calgary, Alberta*

## Only Connect

Your report on the tsunami-like wave that hit Cornwall on 27 June [**FT279:24**] pondered various possible causes. What struck me is that you didn't link that event and the 65ft (20m) asteroid that came within 7,600 miles (12,200km) of the Earth on the same day [**FT279:10**] – surely some connection?

**Julian Smith**
*Wales (sent 22 Oct 2011)*

## Chinese "unicorn"

According to Wikipedia, the one-horned Javan or Sumatran rhinoceros was present in the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi and south of the Yangtze up to the T'ang Dynasty (AD 618–907) and in Sichuan up to the late 17th century. However, a few weeks ago I came across an intriguing report which may reveal that it survived much later than this: on 25 August 1898, the *Kalgoorlie Western Argus* in Western Australia reported the following, reprinted from the *North China Herald*:

"A unicorn has appeared in Hsuchou, sent by the gods! The animal has been carefully photographed in order that the likeness may be sent to the Emperor. Unfortunately, not being skilled in taxidermy, the Europeans were unable to grant the town people's request and preserve this wonderful animal for his Majesty's personal inspection. Nor were the Europeans able to inform the public as to why a cow should produce such an anomalous specimen of the bovine kind. Horny scales covered the whole body, and on the forehead was a projection from which a horn had been broken off. Its mission was accomplished early, for the gods allowed it to live only long enough to inform this world that great things are in store for Hsouchou and for China – North China."

This sounds very like a one-horned rhinoceros. The year 1898 would have been very late for tribute to be sent from Burma or Vietnam to Imperial China in the form of a rhinoceros. Note the word "appeared". From where exactly? Locally? Abroad? We are not told. Obviously "the gods" got it completely wrong. Two years later, China was engulfed by the Boxer Rebellion.

Hsuchou is Xuzhou in China's north-east Jiangsu province, far from the area once inhabited by the one-horned rhinoceros. I have been unable to trace the above-mentioned photograph.

**Richard Muirhead**
*By email*

## Malaysian polt

In his description of poltergeist activity in Malaysia [**FT281:40**], Paul Cropper lists factors both for and against the case being "genuinely paranormal". To use Cropper's own words, "call me an old sceptic", but I must confess to having doubts about all of those that he has in the "for" list.

The first four items were that: the widow who heads the household never sought to profit from the events; it had cost her dearly; she seemed completely honest; and independent witnesses saw objects move and disappear. Fine, but none of this supports – or denies – a genuine paranormal event. She may simply be an innocent bystander and independent witnesses are just as easy to fool as family members.

Also, the fact that "no family member had an obvious motive to hoax the affair" is disingenuous. Hoaxers, as compared with fraudsters, rarely seem to have much more of a motive than the pleasure of fooling people and enjoying the attention caused. Indeed, as cases described by Christopher Milbourne[1] demonstrated, adolescent perpetrators are often surprised at how gullible the adults are.

Other factors seen as "for" a paranormal event are given as: the steady escalation of weirdness; the activity surges when strangers arrived; and increased activity after attempts to "cleanse" the house. All apparently "conform to patterns of polt behaviour noted elsewhere". But this assumes that the polt behaviour elsewhere is genuine and overlooks the fact that the increasing weirdness may simply reflect the perpetrator's learning process and hence ability to produce effects to order, especially when there are strangers to impress.

Cropper suggests that "the presence of adolescent girls is sometimes seen as a veritable hallmark of a genuine polt case." This isn't convincing, since one can justifiably say that the presence of adolescents is sometimes seen as a veritable hallmark of a hoax! And in this case we have a note allegedly written by the *djinni* that looks like the 13-year-old Wan's writing. On top of that, but not noted in the "against" list, is the fact that Wan seemed to "know" when fires were starting and was usually the first to find and extinguish them.

The fact that over 200 localised fires occurred without doing any serious damage could be down to Wan "finding them" before any damage occurred, but also if you set fire to a small quantity of a solvent on the surface of a material it may burn off and do little damage, especially if the material is tightly rolled bolts of cloth or its surface is damp. As to a fire "burning impossibly on a wet towel": in my misspent youth doing a chemistry degree, a common party-trick was to dip a finger in water then into a flammable solvent and light it: it would burn beautifully on the surface of the water and not burn your finger.

The fire photographed is allegedly "unusually bright and smokeless". In fact, natural cellulosic materials (cotton, linen) burn with little smoke and a yellow flame. (By comparison, synthetics – such as the nylon also mentioned in the article – catch fire quickly, but tend initially to shrink from the flame and then sputter and, if hanging up, drip burning dollops of burning/gooey material: what happens then depends on what they fall onto and how much oxygen is present.) However, the fire in the photograph might also have been caused by a small amount of a solvent low in hydrogen content, hence producing little or no smoke, burning off. I would have been asking: What solvents were available?

The intense yellow of the flame is caused by the presence of sodium. Try sprinkling common salt into a gas flame – it obviously won't burn steadily, but it will illustrate the colour. Such flames don't have to be "created" intentionally because sodium salts occur in virtually everything and even minute amounts cause a yellow flame. Heating materials in a flame and observing the colour to get a clue to what metal is present is a classic piece of qualitative chemical analysis that was often useless because the intense yellow from trace amounts of sodium masked the colour being produced by the presence of a more abundant metal. It would be more interesting if the flame had been virtually any other colour, such as apple green or blue-violet, indicating the presence of barium and cæsium respectively.

**Note**

[1] Christopher Milbourne: *ESP, Seers & Psychics*, Thomas Y Crowell Co., 1970.

**Ron Gardner**
*Ludlow, Shropshire*

## Ray Bradbury

As Guest Curator of the British Library's Science Fiction Exhibition and an enthusiastic reader of *FT*, I'm keeping quiet about the recent review, though I'm of course delighted that Mike Meakin went anyway and enjoyed it [**FT280:73**]. I can answer his enquiry about the "special flat edition" of Edwin A Abbott's *Flatland*: it *was* the science fiction author, Ray Bradbury, not his late namesake of the Birmingham SF Group, who signed it. The "book", designed by Andrew Hoyem, was published in 1980 in an edition of 275 copies, with an introduction by, and signed and numbered by, Ray (*Fahrenheit 451*) Bradbury. Further details are on the website of the publisher, Arion Press, at www.arionpress.com/catalog/007.htm.

**Andy Sawyer**
*Science Fiction*
*Librarian, University of Liverpool Library*

## Kate Bush

Since the publication of my article "The Kate Bush Enigma" [**FT277:52–53**], I was contacted by former UFO researcher Ian Mrzyglod, who supplied a clarification of the claim (alluded to in my article) that Kate Bush was the "President of a West Country UFO group".

In the early 1980s, Mrzyglod – a prominent member of the West Country UFO Group PROBE and editor of the *PROBE Report*, a notable UFO journal from 1979 to 1983 – wrote to Bush after hearing she was interested in UFOs, to ask whether she would consider being a patron for PROBE. She wrote back, enclosing a signed photograph on which she wrote: "Aren't the skies full?" She agreed to be a patron of PROBE, but stressed she was too busy to take an active role. This was subsequently announced on page two of *PROBE Report* vol.1 no.2, (Aug 1980). On hearing of her possible UFO sighting near Loch Ness, Mrzyglod wrote to her asking for more details, but received no reply. He later discovered that the signed photograph and letter from Bush had gone missing (as in "borrowed" without permission) while he was in the process of moving to America in 1989.

The full story: http://bit.ly/qPUlgV (notesfromtheborderlands.wordpress.com).

**Robert Moore**
*By email*

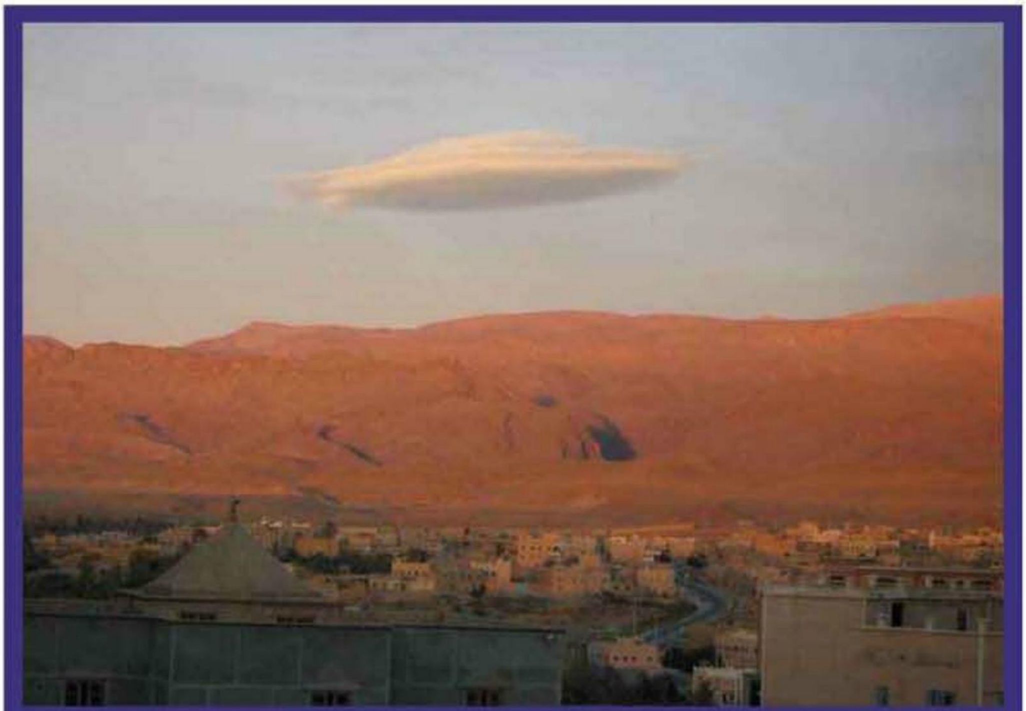
Further to Robert Moore's excellent and fascinating feature on Kate Bush: for years there was a rumour/urban myth/conviction within *Doctor Who* fandom that Ms Bush was, in fact, the author of "Kinda", one of its classic tales from the pre-revival days. It's not true (*crosses fingers tightly*), but who knows? Maybe Stephen Moffat could consider her when thinking about writers for future series…

**Louise Bath**
*Halesowen, West Midlands*

ONE BASKET CASE ONLY
The Surreal McCoy

WWW.THESURREALMCCOY.COM

# letters



## Morning cloud

Recently, I was staying in a Moroccan town called Tinerhir near the Atlas Mountains and this lenticular cloud greeted me from my hotel room first thing in the morning when I pulled back the curtains. I'd never seen a cloud that looked so much like a UFO before. It made my day!
**Yvonne Battersby** *Manchester*

## Cross-dressing sailor

With reference to Paul Chambers's article on women going to sea [**FT279:57**], a later example of this practice was Harriet Elizabeth Davies of Penketh near Warrington in Cheshire. She was born about 1832/3, the daughter or adopted daughter of Peter Davies, a pork butcher and former shoemaker from Warrington. After the death of both her first husband, Peter Taylor, about 1853 and her second, Thomas Boydell, in late 1860, she left her small daughter with her parents and went down to Bootle. There she joined the barque *Urgent* under Captain Devin, calling herself Ned Davies. This ship had an adventurous and dangerous run, going down to South Wales in ballast, and from there shipping coals to supply the Union blockade ships during the American Civil War. She claimed she was never once detected and even got a good conduct medal during a time of "highly novel and sensational experiences".

After the Civil War ended, she returned home and started a new life with a third husband, Andrew Ormiston, whom she married in 1866. However when her 18-year-old, newly married daughter died in 1870, domestic life again lost its appeal and once again she became Neddy Davies and set out to work as a hard-drinking navvy. When she got too old for that, she turned to working as a farm labourer in the nearby villages of Burtonwood and Croft. Her drinking got her several times before the police courts of Warrington, where the local magistrates could not make up their minds whether they were more scandalised by the cross-dressing or the drunkenness. Even when she gave up Ned Davies, she kept up with the booze, though when she was taken into custody for the last time for being drunk and disorderly on the streets of Warrington, it was some time before the police recognised her. She died as August turned to September in 1887 and was buried on 5 September in the quiet churchyard of St Mary's, Great Sankey, under the name Harriet Ormiston. A report of her death in the *Warrington Guardian* a couple of days later circled the world and was even reprinted in the *New York Times* on 12 February 1888.

**Peter Rogerson**
*Urmston, Manchester*

## Most Haunted

It is a shame that MG Sherlock [**FT279:71**] didn't watch a few more episodes of *Most Haunted*. I think the popularity (and charm) of this long-running series lay not so much in the actual results of the investigations, which the resident parapsychologist usually dismissed anyway, but with the group dynamic that built up within the team. Essentially, the programmes were entertaining rather than serious. Over the years, viewers got to know the personal interrelationships and traits of the cast and crew though their multi-tasking within the investigation team. For example, Cath was the hairdresser as well as an investigator, Stuart the rigger became a regular focus of "physical" phenomena and so was put into situations he was reluctant to experience, and so on. All this was complemented by a strict hierarchy based on the ownership of the production company with Yvette very much in charge, pushing the investigations and investigators forward. Chuck in a "medium" and a parapsychologist, turn the lights off and what's not to like? Several series also included a "making of" after each programme, which was often more interesting than the actual investigation.

The live versions got bigger and more elaborate over the years and some of us ended up glued to it for three hours a night, five nights in a row! Genius set-ups – including live burial and Lilly Savage helping Yvette drip blood onto graves in Venice – made for some classic telly. Occasionally, they even recorded some genuinely perplexing phenomenon, but only occasionally. It didn't stop us tuning in next time, just in case. *Most Haunted* was always daft – but fascinating too.

**Colin Bowden**
*By email*

## Pots and kettles?

Andy Roberts and David Clarke mention the American UFO researcher Philip Imbrogno [**FT279:28**]. They note that claims by Imbrogno about his military service background and academic qualifications have been challenged, and ask, rhetorically, whether this devalues his UFO research. Answering their own question, they observe that "it certainly doesn't do it any favours".

Regarding the matter of deliberate deception, it's worth noting that Andy Roberts lists "UFO hoaxing" as one of his interests. (www.uk-ufo.org/condign/bioar.htm). Furthermore, in a recent interview (recorded, I think, in the first half of 2010), he claimed that in the "vast majority of the books [he had] written", he had included a few stories that he'd "made up, basically" – the aim being to gauge how slavishly people would copy things from books without checking the references!

**Dr Peter McCue**
*By email*

# it happened to me...

Have you had strange experiences that you cannot explain?
We are always interested in reading of odd events and occurrences.
CONTACT US BY POST: **FORTEAN TIMES, BOX 2409, LONDON, NW5 4NP**
OR E-MAIL TO **sieveking@forteantimes.com**
Or post your message on the **www.forteantimes.com** message board.

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

## Proactive cell phone

My wife and I recently went to our local Homebase to get a replacement door chime. After mulling over the various options, we made our selection and walked towards the checkouts. As we walked, my wife's phone rang and she took it out of her bag. The screen display said that she had one missed call, at 11.20, from John. We thought this was odd, because on her list of contacts John is me! We checked the number and I took out my own phone, which was (unusually) switched on and displaying the normal start screen. After a bit of searching (I don't use it very often) I found the call list and confirmed that a call to my wife's phone had been made at 11.20.

Now at 11.20 we were together in Morrison's supermarket and my phone was in my pocket. I don't have anything sophisticated, like voice or speed dial, so in order to place a call I have to: (1) Press OK for Options; (2) move the OK button twice to the left for Contacts; (3) press OK for Names List; (4) press OK to display the list; (5) press JKL for Jacqui; (6) press OK to display her number; (7) press OK for options; (8) press OK to call. Somehow the phone managed to carry out these steps on its own! We were both quite stunned, but also amused. Has anyone else had a similar experience?

**John Blackburn**
*By email*

## Phone dies

When my wife and I moved into our current home, nearly six years ago, her mother bought us a new landline telephone as a housewarming present. I loved my mother-in-law, and my wife was very close to her and spoke to her on the phone nearly every day, often more than once. When she suddenly and unexpectedly died 10 days ago [2 October 2011], the phone equally suddenly stopped working. Nothing to do with batteries, and the line itself works perfectly, so we have had to replace it. I'm not implying anything. I don't believe in any conventional afterlife, and I don't think she did, but if she's still somehow "around", I don't mind at all.

- I was very interested to see the photograph of the pink grasshopper that two girls found in their garden last summer [**FT281:12**]. In the late 1950s, when I was a little boy, I found a red grasshopper on the slopes of Knockagh hill, overlooking Belfast Lough. I remember being struck at how similar its colour was to the breasts of the male sticklebacks (or "spricks" as we called them), which I had in a fish tank. I kept the grasshopper in a matchbox and took it to Belfast City Museum, where it was kindly explained that I hadn't discovered a new species, which, as I couldn't find one in a book anywhere, I hoped I had.

**Bob Denmark**
*By email*

## Dwarf with attitude

I teach geology at university in Birmingham. On 9 March 2011, I was wandering around a local quarry on a field trip with a class of students when one student drew my attention to a strange-looking individual some 300ft (90m) away. Something about its behaviour looked eerie. By measuring against a tractor in the distance, I estimate it was 4ft to 4ft 6in (1.2–1.4m) tall and covered in a darkish one-piece garment that clung to its form – a body that seemed totally starved. It appeared to have a helmet on, and pointed an object towards us. This object glowed red, then blue, then off-white. I might then have been distracted, because he/she/it just vanished – at least none of the group saw it go away.

Six students and I are reporting heavy headaches and trouble sleeping or concentrating since the event two days ago as I write, and one student has mysteriously miscarried her unborn.

**Jacqueline Riler**
*By email*

## Fracture sensed

Jody Willis's account of his son with Down's Syndrome sensing his mother's oncoming heart attack [**FT279:74**] brought to mind the following incident. In 2006, I broke my left wrist in a common Colle's fracture of the radius. About eight weeks later, and a couple of weeks after the cast came off, I attended a birthday party for the toddler son of friends. Also attending were the child's first cousins, whom I had never met, twin autistic boys aged about six. They were beautiful children but without much speech at all. At some point during the party, one of the boys walked up to me, silently put his hand on my wrist, and looked up into my eyes (something autistic children don't do much) with an expression of extreme, almost exaggerated, sympathy. I remember he tilted his head and looked sad, as if to say, I feel your pain. I was taken aback, since we had not mentioned my arm, although there may have been a slight bit of residual swelling he could have noticed. I definitely felt that the child was "reading" me and knew what had happened. When I mentioned the incident to their uncle as we left, he shrugged and said, oh yeah, they do that psychic s*** all the time. The topper was that the next day I ran into the twins' aunt, and she said one of the twins had fallen after the party and broken his arm! What bone did he break, I asked, knowing the answer beforehand. Of course it was the radius. Which arm? She thought it was the left arm, but she wasn't sure.

**Julia Morgan Scott**
*Signal Mountain, Tennessee*

## Flying remotes

We spent a few days on the island of Arran, in the House of Machrie, a big pile on the west coast of the Isle of Arran, overlooking the sea and the Mull of Kintyre beyond. It's bang in the middle of a part of the island's coastal plain, well known for a number of stone circles, standing stones and burial sites dating from between 3,000 and 2,000 BC.

At about 11:00pm on 25 June, there were five people in the sitting room watching the BBC's Glastonbury broadcast, among them my wife Julia and me. Julia's recollection is that there were three remote control devices on top of the TV, all perfectly well balanced, when all of a sudden one of them flew off and landed about 4ft (1.2m) away on the carpet in front of the fireplace. That was strange enough. We looked at each other and I got up and replaced it. A minute or two later, one of the other remotes flew off in the same way. There were comments about how weird this was, and once again I got up and replaced it on top of the TV, making quite sure it was secure and balanced. Then, a bit later, it happened again, a third time, same trajectory. This really freaked us out.

I wandered out and mentioned to some people in the kitchen that remotes were flying off the TV in the sitting room. Then I went back – somebody had changed the channel and suggested that whatever it was didn't like Coldplay any more than we did. It didn't happen again.

**Martin Village**
*London*

# STRANGE AND SENSATIONAL STORIES FROM

# POLICE NEWS

THE ILLUSTRATED

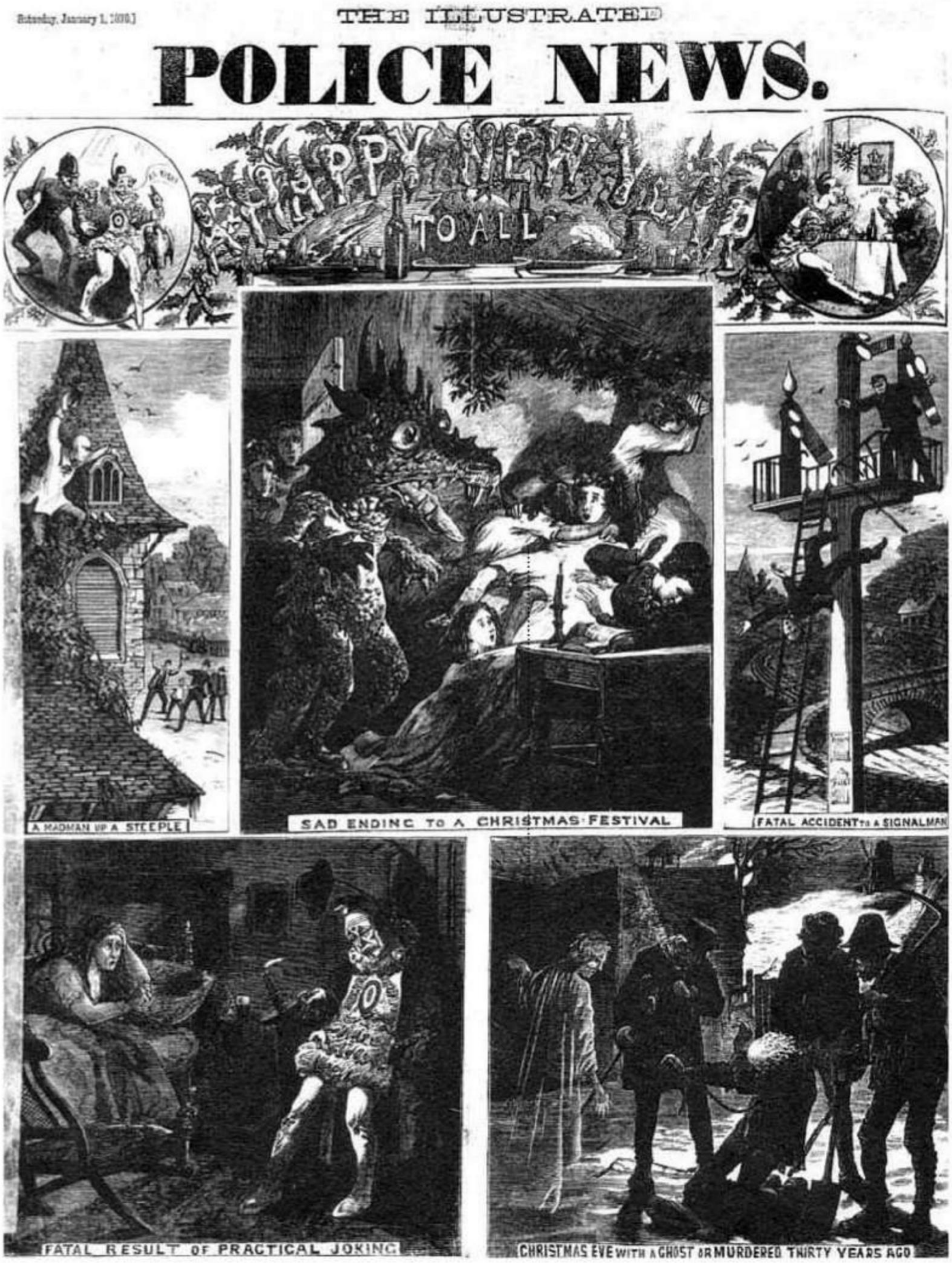
LAW COURTS AND WEEKLY RECORD

JAN BONDESON presents more sensational stories and startling Victorian images from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News*.

## 8. TRAGIC EFFECTS OF PRACTICAL JOKING

In Victorian times, fun-loving gentlemen involved in practical joking had to be aware that women and children were delicate creatures, with very sensitive nervous systems. Under no circumstances should they sneak up on women or children when wearing some kind of theatrical costume, since people dressed as devils or monsters could trigger the most dreadful hysterical attacks. In spite of these precautions on the part of the pranksters in disguise, there were some distressing incidents in late 1876, seized upon with glee by the *Illustrated Police News*.

Mr Stackhouse, one such fun-loving gentleman residing near Middleton, went to a rather jolly Christmas party in 1875, where he ate and drank well. His friends persuaded him to play the part of a clown in a pantomime, which he did to everyone's amusement. After the show, the inebriated Mr Stackhouse had to be helped home by his mischievous friends, who thought it very funny that he was still wearing the extravagant clown's outfit. But when Mr Stackhouse staggered into his bedroom, his wife thought a stranger had entered the house. She gave a series of piercing screams, which were followed by three hysterical fits. By the time the 1 January issue of the *IPN* went to press, she had still not recovered, and her life was despaired of. Mr Stackhouse was inconsolable, and his friends very much regretted their imprudent joking.


Saturday, January 1, 1876.]
THE ILLUSTRATED
POLICE NEWS.
HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL
A MADMAN UP A STEEPLE
SAD ENDING TO A CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL
FATAL ACCIDENT TO A SIGNALMAN
FATAL RESULT OF PRACTICAL JOKING
CHRISTMAS EVE WITH A GHOST OR MURDERED THIRTY YEARS AGO

On 27 December 1875, only a few days after the mishap to poor Mrs Stackhouse, some other jolly young people were holding a Christmas party at Tatchet House in Derbyshire, the home of a wealthy gentleman named Johnson. When a mischievous and inebriated young man named Mr Brounger had dressed up in an elaborate dragon costume, he thought it would be very funny to burst into the room of some of his friends, to give them a fright. Unfortunately, he went into the nursery by mistake. Thinking it must be a real dragon, the children stampeded from the room, screaming hysterically, and the nursemaid herself suffered a protracted fit. The *IPN* summed the situation up very succinctly: "Two of the children were so frightened that for some time their lives were despaired of; and, indeed, it is very questionable if they ever recover from the terrible effect of the sudden fright. The maidservant is seriously unwell in consequence. This incident, it is to be hoped, will act as a warning to hilarious young gentlemen who are fond of practical jokes."

Mrs Stackhouse suffers a fit when she sees the drunken clown, and the dragon frightens the children out of their wits.

In addition, for no extra charge, we have a madman up a steeple, a railwayman falling to his death, and an old man seeing a ghost and confessing to a murder committed 30 years earlier. Happy New Year to all, from the *IPN* editorial office, 1 January 1876!

FORTEAN TIMES PRESENTS AN ANTHOLOGY OF EXTRAORDINARY ENDS

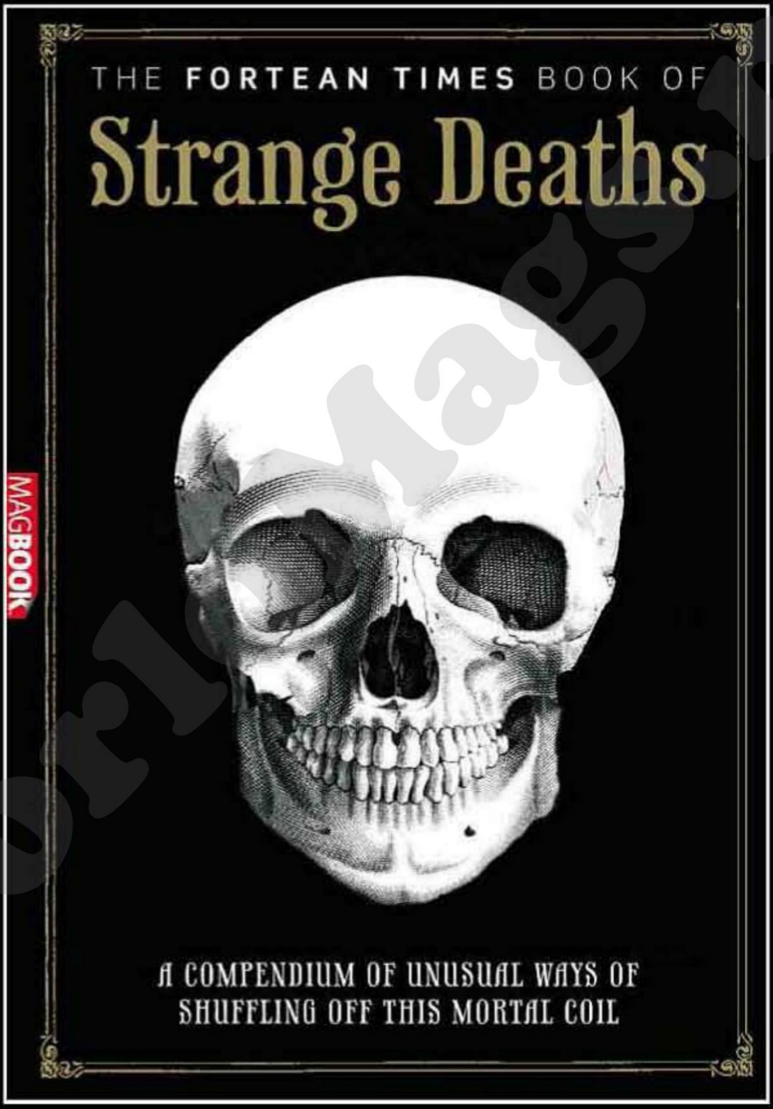
Death comes to us
all in the end... but some people manage to
make a more memorable exit than others!

ANIMAL LOVER
POISONED BY
PARROT FARTS

DINER KILLED
BY FLYING
LAMB CHOP

CIRCUS DWARF
EATEN BY HIPPO

MOURNER
CRUSHED
BY COFFIN


THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF
Strange Deaths
A COMPENDIUM OF UNUSUAL WAYS OF
SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL
MAGBOOK

BUDDHIST MONK
KILLED BY GIANT
JOSS STICK

ART THIEF
IMPALED ON
SCULPTURE

DUCK HUNTER
SHOT BY DOG

MAN BEHEADS
ROOMMATE FOR
SNORING

TO ORDER DIRECT
CALL 0844 844 0053
OR VISIT
MAGBOOKS.COM
FOR PRINT AND
DIGITAL EDITIONS

£6.99

OUT NOW!

ALSO AVAILABLE TO
PURCHASE FROM
amazon.co.uk
WHSmith

WorldMags.net

# reader info

## how to subscribe

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £39.98; EC £47.50; USA $79.99 ($143.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £55.
Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

### North America (US & Canada)

Subscribers should contact: IMS. 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 888-428 6676. or 800-428 3003; Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at www.imsnews.com.

### UK, Europe & rest of world

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times** Dovetail Services, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU, UK. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.
Telephone payments and queries: 0844 844 0049.
Fax payments and queries: 0844 815 0866.
E-mail payments and queries: ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

## how to submit

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by *FT* readers and contributors in any medium or format.

### Illustrations

Contact the art director before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

### Article & forum submissions

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, UK or email david_sutton@dennis.co.uk. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate. A contributors' guide is available. For the latest version of this please contact us on one of the numbers on the editorial page or consult our website at www.forteantimes.com.

### Letters

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email sieveking@forteantimes.com. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

### Books & periodicals for review

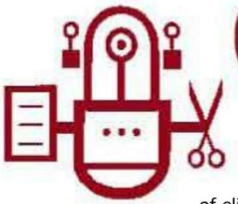
Send to: Reviews Editor, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, UK. Send DVDs and games to the Editor, as above.

### Caveat

*FT* aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. *FT* can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

*We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.*

## Clippers wanted!



Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: 8 Dec 2011. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

**Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK**
**E-mail: sieveking@forteantimes.com**
**or post on the FT website at www.forteantimes.co.uk, where there is a contributor's guide.**

# Why Fortean?

**Fortean Times** is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

**FT** toes no party line.

## Special Correspondents

**AUSTRALIA** Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC). **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Neil L Inglis, Michael Newton, Steve Scanlon. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Bobby Zodiac. **FINLAND** Heather Fowler. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin, Cliff Wren. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson, Leslie John Thomson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Chris Williams. **TURKEY** Izzet Goksu. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Ron Rosenblatt (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

## Fort Sorters (who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Steve Moore, Liz Parratt, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

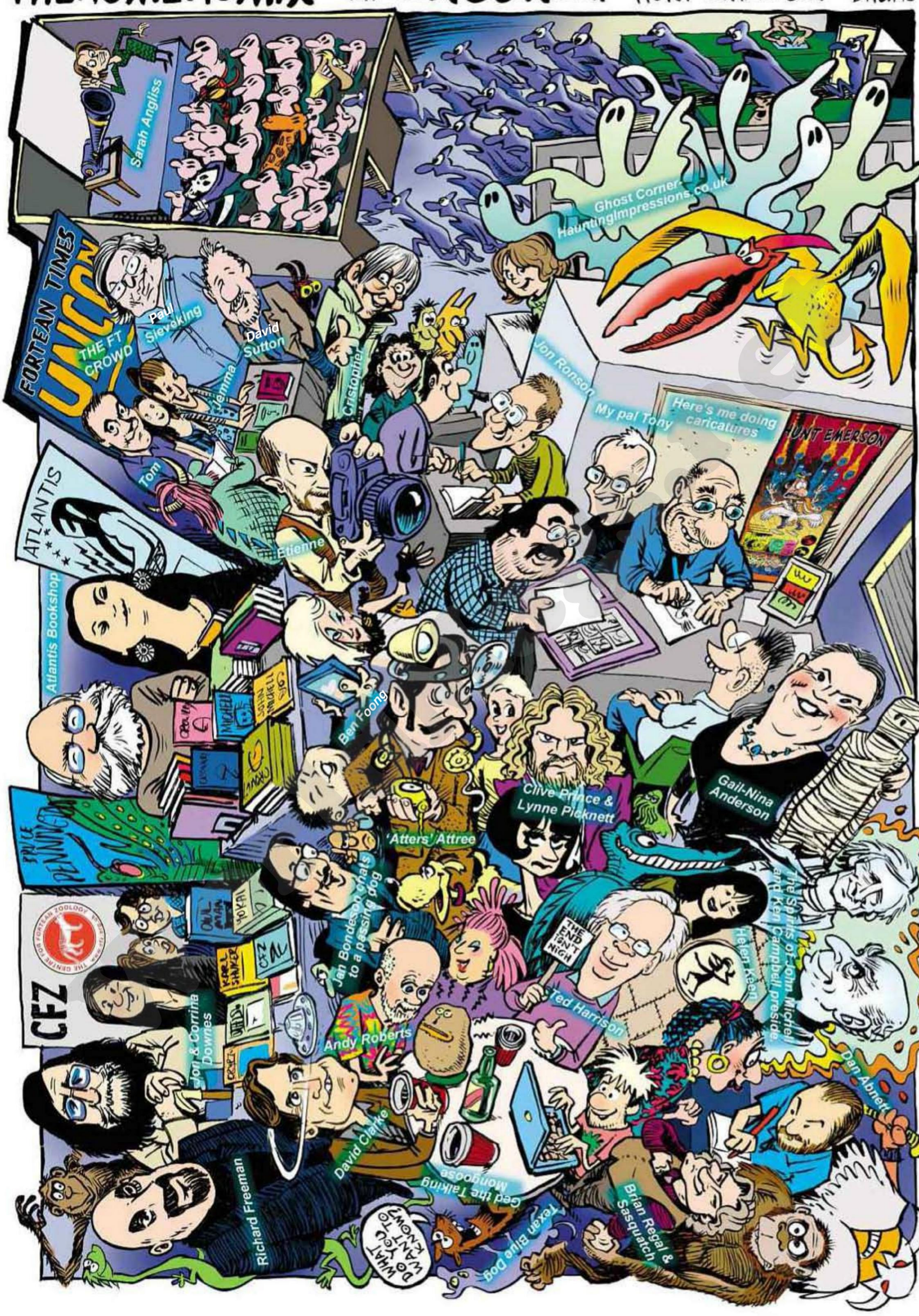
## Clipping Credits for FT283

Michael Ahmed, Richard Alexander, Tia-Anna, Gerard Apps, Louise Bath, John Billingsley, Iosif Boczor, Cecilia Boggis, Joanne Bourne, Matthew Cardier, Rachel Carthy, Peter Christie, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Kate Eccles, John H Evans, Paul Farthing, Rob Gandy, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Alan Gibb, Donald Gilchrist, Anne Hardwick, Tony Healy, Hugh Henry, Nigel Herwin, Kevin Hubbard, Colin Ings, Martyn P Jackson, Rosalind Johnson, Bill & Louise Kelly, Richard Lowke, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Steve Moore, Andy Munro, Jen Ogilvie, John Palazzi, Chris Powell, Jim Price, Keith Ruffles, Matt Salusbury, Meryl Santis, Stephen Savage, Steve Scanlon, Paul Screeton, Stephen P Smith, Tony Smith, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Pam Thornton, Joe Trainor, Janet Tromans, Carole Tyrrell, Jeffrey Vallance, Nicholas Warren, Carmel Watson, Len Watson, Paul Whyte, Ion Will, Rosemary Williams, Bobby Zodiac.

# PHENOMENOMIX AT UNCON 2011

HUNT EMERSON

thanks Etienne


Sarah Angliss
Ghost Corner- HauntingImpressions.co.uk
FORTEAN TIMES UNCON
THE FT CROWD
Paul Sieveking
David Sutton
Jemma
Cristopher
Tom
Jon Ronson
My pal Tony
Here's me doing caricatures
HUNT EMERSON
ATLANTIS
Etienne
Atlantis Bookshop
Ben Foong
Clive Prince & Lynne Picknett
Gail-Nina Anderson
BRUCE PENNINGTON
'Atters' Attree
Jan Bondeson chats to a passing dog
YOKAI
KARL SHUKER
THE END ISN'T NIGH
The Spirits of John Michell and Ken Campbell preside
Helen Keen
Ted Harrison
CFZ
THE CENTRE FOR FORTEAN ZOOLOGY
Jon & Corrina Downes
Andy Roberts
Dan Abnett
David Clarke
Ged the Talking Mongoose
Richard Freeman
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?
Texan Blue Dog
Brian Regal & Sasquatch

# COMING NEXT MONTH

## SCARED TO DEATH

HOW A 19TH-CENTURY GHOST ENCOUNTER PROVED FATAL

## HEARING VOICES

SKEPTICS VERSUS PSYCHICS: THE SALLY MORGAN AFFAIR

+

**FLYING MEN OF 1880, MISSING MEMORIES, UNCON 2011 AND MUCH MORE...**

FORTEAN TIMES 284

ON SALE 5 JAN 2012

---

HUGO PIETTE

# TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

## JANUARY 1982

This month, the *East Anglian* magazine published the story of the famous death by 'spontaneous combustion' (SHC) of Grace Pett, in Ipswich, Suffolk, in April 1744; a version of an *FT* article by Peter Christie [**FT35:6–9**]. The following issue of the *East Anglian* included a letter in response from a reader pointing out that in 1796 the landscape painter John Constable made a sketch of an old cottage just outside Ipswich, and wrote across the top "Curious circumstances happened in this cottage a few years since; a poor woman being burnt entirely to ashes". This incident has not been dated, but could well be from the same period and offers the tantalising prospect of being the location of Grace Pett's combustion. The sketch is in the Victoria & Albert Museum, and can be viewed on the Internet at http://bit.ly/rzEVIN (collections.vam.ac.uk). **FT38:33–34**

An Indian army expedition, trekking along the lower Himalayan border with Bhutan, encountered a group of naked people living in a cave above the snow line. First they saw two naked females, who ran from them. Seeing the soldiers were not hostile, the women returned and beckoned them to follow to a cave. There they saw others, including males; all of them had Mongoloid features, long hair and seemed to eat only raw meat. The report was questioned by anthropologists, including Prof. Gerald Berreman of Berkeley, who thought "it is inconceivable that any group of people in the world [..] don't know the use of fire." He concluded: "The army must have seen the Yeti, not humans" – an unexpected suggestion from an unexpected direction. **FT45:44**

## JANUARY 1992

It's always a buzz to find examples of *ostension* in action; this re-play of the 'Trojan Horse' took place in Sydney, Australia, during a dispute between the Commonwealth Bank and the Bryant Group of site contractors, whose heavy equipment the bank had repossessed. Monday morning saw managing director Joe Bryant drive up to the site gates with a huge trailer carrying a gigantic "13ft [4m] cylindrical metal horse". The guards thought he was returning the sculpture and let him through. Once inside the gates, 30 workers burst from the cylinder, overpowered the guards, and opened the gates to more workers. Bryant said that they wanted to keep working in order to pay the bank. **FT63:7**

A rather odd crime occurred in a ladies' toilet at Merseyside's Floral Hall, Southport. While a rock concert played, someone spent considerable time in the toilet "meticulously" peeling wallpaper off the walls "in complete rolls" and stacking them neatly in a corner. The city's tourism chief was said to have been furious, having stepped up security at the venue after a similar incident three years earlier. Of the unknown culprit, he could only say: "It's the work of an expert". **FT63:32**

## JANUARY 2002

The apparent absence of female dwarfs in online fantasy games has become part of gaming lore. They exist, we are told, but only dwarfs themselves can tell male from female. Apparently the tradition goes back, at least, to Tolkien. This month, it also became an issue for gnomes. At the world's first international congress on garden gnomes, held in Chemnitz in eastern Germany, the Swiss president of the Association for the Protection of Gnomes' Rights argued that gnomes had always been male and should always stay that way, adding that female gnomes were "inconceivable". He particularly objected to Reinhard Griebel, a delegate who has a business producing female gnomes. The president lost the vote. How modern! **FT159:12**

When Awang Masidi Tengah was found in a Borneo jungle, he was dressed in rags and his hair was waist-long. The 27-year-old claimed he had survived for seven years living in a small tent and eating wild plants. He was returned to his family in the Tutong district but declined to say why he had run away in the first place. What makes this story interesting is that a rumour had grown up in his village that he had been abducted by a female genie and was forced to marry her. **FT159:12**

Punjabi villagers in Chomo Ber Kalan were abandoning their doctors for an 86-year-old Tantrik baba. The old swami told them to bring along bottles of their urine, which he then blessed and ordered them to drink – a remedy prescribed by ancient Ayurvedic literature. He claimed, or they believed, it would cure any disease; indeed, one farmer said it cured him of impotence. One local doctor fumed: "It's time someone put a stop to this nonsense or else we will be forced to close shop." **FT158:12**

# Write Your Way To A New Career!

## Writers Bureau Celebrates Twenty-two Years of Helping New Writers

### by Nick Daws

When distance-learning pioneer Ernest Metcalfe founded The Writers Bureau in the late 1980s, he can hardly have dared hope that twenty-two years on it would be acknowledged as Britain's leading writing school. Yet so it proved, with thousands of Writers Bureau students seeing their work in print for the first time. And, for many of those who persevered with their writing, the dream of becoming a successful writer has turned into reality.

Students such as Tim Skelton. An engineer by profession, he had always harboured an ambition to write, and at the age of 40 signed up with The Writers Bureau. The decision changed his life: "My writing career took off exponentially. In 2005 I started appearing regularly in lifestyle and in-flight magazines. The following year I was commissioned by Bradt Travel Guides to write a guidebook to Luxembourg. I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated guidebooks for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA."

> *"My writing career took off exponentially."*

Another student who benefited was Hazel McHaffie. Hazel wanted to make her academic work in Medical Ethics more accessible to people, and decided to write the themes into novels. Following her Writers Bureau course, Hazel has had five novels published, and appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2008. She also has her own website at www.hazelmchaffie.com.

Sometimes studying with The Writers Bureau takes students down new and unexpected paths. Patricia Holness originally enrolled on The Writers Bureau's Writing for Children course. However, she soon realised that what she was learning applied to other types of writing as well.

She is now a full-time writer, regularly selling short stories for both children and adults. She also has a monthly column in Devon Life.

Hazel McHaffie

Tim Skelton

These are just a selection from the inspirational true stories from students of The Writers Bureau. There's no reason why YOU couldn't be their next success story. With a 15-day free trial and money-back guarantee, there is nothing to lose and potentially a whole new career to gain! So why not visit their website at www.writersbureau.com or call on Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

## How To Become A Successful Writer!

**As a freelance writer, you can earn very good money in your spare time, writing the stories, articles, books, scripts etc that editors and publishers want. Millions of pounds are paid annually in fees and royalties. Earning your share can be fun, profitable and creatively most fulfilling.**

To help you become a successful writer we offer you a first-class, home-study course from professional writers – with individual guidance from expert tutors and flexible tuition tailored to your own requirements. You are shown how to make the most of your abilities, where to find ideas, how to turn them into publishable writing and how to sell them. In short, we show you exactly how to become a published writer. **If you want writing success – this is the way to start!**

Whatever your writing ambitions, we can help you to achieve them. For we give you an effective, stimulating and most enjoyable creative writing course… appreciated by students and acclaimed by experts.

It's ideal for beginners. No previous experience or special background is required. You write and study at your own pace – you do not have to rush – as you have four years to complete your course. **Many others have been successful this way.** If they can do it – why can't you?

We are so confident that we can help you become a published writer that we give you a **full refund guarantee.** If you have not earned your course fees from published writing by the time you finish the course, we will refund them in full.

If you want to be a writer start by requesting a free copy of our prospectus 'Write and be Published'. Please call our freephone number or visit our website NOW.

**COURSE FEATURES**

- 30 FACT-PACKED MODULES
- 3 SPECIALIST HANDBOOKS
- 20 WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS
- ADVISORY SERVICE
- TUTORIAL SUPPORT
- FLEXIBLE STUDY PROGRAMME
- STUDENT COMMUNITY AREA
- HOW TO PRESENT YOUR WORK
- HOW TO SELL YOUR WRITING
- 15 DAY TRIAL PERIOD
- FULL REFUND GUARANTEE

**www.writersbureau.com**

☎ **FREEPHONE**
**24 HOURS**
**0800 856 2008**

**Save £30 Quote AT**

email: 11W1@writersbureau.com
Please include your name and address

AWARD WINNING WRITER
Christina Jones, Oxfordshire
"So far, I have had eighteen novels published. The Writers Bureau helped make this possible for me. Within six months of enrolling on my course I was having work commissioned by editors and I still work regularly for magazines."

Michael Foley, Essex
"Completing The Writers Bureau course has made it possible for me to attain my life-long ambition of becoming a published writer. The level of success I have achieved has far outweighed what I was hoping for when beginning the course. By the end of this year I should have eight books already published and hopefully two more finished."

Cindy-Lou Dale, Kent
"I thought you'd like to know that seven years since doing my course at WB I've been published in more than 150 magazines around the world. I've now got to the stage where I'm turning down all-inclusive exotic press trips!"

*Please send me free details on how to become a successful, freelance writer:*

NAME ..........................................................

ADDRESS ..........................................................

..........................................................

.......................................... POST CODE ..........................

EMAIL ..........................................................

Freepost RSSK-JZAC-JCJG
**The Writers Bureau**
Dept AT81211
Manchester, M3 1LE

Writers Bureau 22 Years of Success

WorldMags.net

LEFT FILMS PRESENTS...

DVD ZOMBIE FEST!

Stag
IT'S GOING TO GET MESSY
NIGHT OF THE DEAD
"PART ALIENS, PART EVIL DEAD. COVER YOUR FACE AND CATCH YOUR BREATH"
ALIEN UNDEAD
"FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS, THE SCI-FI/HORROR FLICK IS TRULY BACK WITH A VENGEANCE... F**K YEAH!!!"
18
LEFT
DVD
COWBOYS & ZOMBIES
"IT'S DEADWOOD – WITH ZOMBIES!"
"GREAT EFFECTS, OUTLANDISH ZOMBIES AND A BOAT LOAD OF GORE"
18
LEFT
DVD

ALIEN UNDEAD - OUT NOW    STAG NIGHT OF THE DEAD - OUT 9TH JAN    COWBOYS & ZOMBIES - OUT NOW

WATCH OUT FOR THESE TITLES
AND MORE SHOCKINGLY GOOD
LEFT FILMS DVDS IN 2012

hmv
hmv.com